V7

PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1940

LOUIS MacNEICE
Oxford in the Twenties

MEYER SCHAPIRO
Marxism and
The Revolutionary Personality

PHILIP RAHV
The Cult of Experience in American Writing

PAUL GOODMAN
Chaplin Again Again and Again

HAROLD ROSENBERG
On the Fall of Paris

JAMES T. FARRELL
Mortimer J. Adler: A Provincial Torquemada

JOHN T. APPLEBY
The Ozarks

JAMES BURNHAM
Hacker's "Triumph of American Capitalism"

6

25¢ A COPY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ACCENT

A Quarterly of New Literature

—contains in its Autumn issue (Vol. I, No. I):

Narratives by Meyer Levin, Gilbert Neiman, Edwa Moser, William March and Jerome Weidman

Poems by Wallace Stevens, Howard Nutt, Josephine Miles, Lincoln Fitzell, Selden Rodman, Marya Zaturenska and David C. DeJong

Articles by Louis Filler, Otis Ferguson, Richard Aldington, Garreta Busey, Olive B. White, Max Putzel, Marvin Herrick and Coleman Rosenberger

—announces for forthcoming issues new work by James T. Farrell, Katherine Anne Porter, Josephine Herbst, Horace Gregory, John Brinnin, Eve Merriam, Ernest Brace, Richard Wright, Jesse Stuart, Eli Cantor, R. P. Blackmur, Desmond Powell, Edwin Burrows and Delmore Schwartz

—can be secured by mailing $1.00 for one year or $1.75 for two years to—

BOX 102, UNIV. STATION
URBANA, ILLINOIS

THE ROAD BACK

The intellectuals and the War — the views of Lewis Mumford, Waldo Frank, Archibald MacLeish, Van Wyck Brooks, Reinhold Niebuhr, Robert Morss Lovett in 1935 and today.

Other provocative essays in the current issue of THE MODERN QUARTERLY:

SHOULD SOCIALISTS SUPPORT THE WAR?
Oskar Lange

WHAT SCIENCE IS
Max Eastman

THE LOGIC OF BOLSHEVISM
Benjamin Gitlow

THE SECOND WORLD WAR: AN EVALUATION
Scott Nearing

HOPEDALE: YANKEE UTOPIA
V. F. Calverton

LEON TROTSKY
an editorial and an elegy

BOOK REVIEWS by Norman Thomas, Alfred M. Bingham, Lewis Corey, Guenter Reimann, S. L. Solon, and Herman Singer.

THE MODERN QUARTERLY

THE MODERN QUARTERLY, 16 St. Luke's Place, New York, N. Y.

Enclosed please find one dollar for a special one year's subscription to The Modern Quarterly.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Christmas—

Dear Friend—

You need Christmas presents. We need new subscribers. Why not give PARTISAN REVIEW for Christmas? One year — six big issues — now costs only one dollar. And, specially for Christmas, we are offering three subscriptions for $2.50, six for $5.* (You may include your own subscription or renewal, if you wish.)

Merry Christmas!

William Petersen
Business Manager

*Add 15c for each Canadian subscription, 30c for each foreign. Thus, for Canada, three for $2.95, six for $5.90; foreign, three for $3.40, six for $6.80.

partisan review

PARTISAN REVIEW
45 Astor Place
New York City

Enclosed find $..... Please send one year of PARTISAN REVIEW to the following people. (Unless otherwise indicated, subscriptions will start with the current issue.)

☐ Send
☐ Do not send } gift cards.

Signature.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coming in PARTISAN REVIEW—

THE SAGA OF ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

by

Morton Dauwen Zabel

A critical examination of the writings and career of America's most successful poet

Sidney Hook: Toynbee's Theory of History

Clement Greenberg: The Poetry of Bertolt Brecht

Allen Tate: New Verse

David Gascoyne: Farewell Chorus

Alan Mather: Functionalism and Naive Materialism in American Architecture

A new regular column by *Dwight Macdonald*

Poetry and Stories by Harvey Breit, Jean Garrigue, Paul Goodman, Desmond Hawkins, David Kerner, Bharati Kumari Sarabhai, W. T. Scott, Karl J. Shapiro

THE HARVARD ADVOCATE

announces

A WALLACE STEVENS NUMBER

for December

among the contents:

the ten earliest poems (1899-1901)
three new poems

a bibliography

critical studies by Howard Baker, John Finch, Harry Levin, Delmore Schwartz, Hi Simons, Theodore Spencer, Morton Dauwen Zabel

personal statements by Cleanth Brooks, Jr., F. O. Matthiessen, Marianne Moore, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, William Carlos Williams and others

orders filled now
at Advocate House,
Cambridge, Mass.

one dollar fifty-
a year: thirty-
five cents a copy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PARTISAN REVIEW

VOLUME VII, No. 6 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1940

THE CULT OF EXPERIENCE IN AMERICAN WRITING	412	*Philip Rahv*
THE DEATH OF LEON TROTSKY	425	*Paul Goodman*
OXFORD IN THE TWENTIES	430	*Louis MacNeice*
ON THE FALL OF PARIS	440	*Harold Rosenberg*
CROSS-COUNTRY: THE OZARKS	449	*John T. Appleby*
THE CULTURAL FRONT	453	*James T. Farrell*
FILM CHRONICLE	456	*Paul Goodman*
MODERN DOCUMENTS: The Train	461	*Anonymous*
BOOKS		
To the Finland Station	466	*Meyer Schapiro*
God Bless America	479	*James Burnham*
"In What Hour"	482	*Gordon Sylander*
INDEX TO VOLUME VII (1940)	484	
A CORRECTION	486	

Editors: F. W. DUPEE, DWIGHT MACDONALD, GEORGE L. K. MORRIS, WILLIAM PHILLIPS, PHILIP RAHV. Business Managers: NANCY MACDONALD, WILLIAM PETERSEN.

PARTISAN REVIEW is published at 117 East 10th Street, New York, N. Y. Please address mail to: 45 Astor Place, New York, N. Y.

PARTISAN REVIEW is published six times a year. Subscription: $1.00 yearly; Canada, $1.15; other foreign countries, $1.30. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright November, 1940, by PARTISAN REVIEW. Reentered as second-class matter, January 20, 1940, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Cult of Experience in American Writing

Philip Rahv

EVERY ATTENTIVE READER of Henry James remembers that highly dramatic scene in *The Ambassadors*—a scene singled out by its author as giving away the "whole case" of his novel—in which Lambert Strether, the elderly New England gentleman who had come to Paris on a mission of business and duty, proclaims his conversion to the doctrine of experience. Caught in the spell of Paris, the discovery of whose grace and form is marked for him by a kind of meaning and intensity that can be likened only to the raptures of a mystic vision, Strether feels moved to renounce publicly the morality of abstention he had brought with him from Woollett, Mass. And that mellow Sunday afternoon, as he mingles with the charming guests assembled in the garden of the sculptor Gloriani, the spell of the world capital of civilization is so strong upon the sensitive old man that he trembles with happiness and zeal. It is then that he communicates to little Bilham his newly acquired piety towards life and the fruits thereof. The worst mistake one can make, he admonishes his youthful interlocutor, is not to live all one can.—"It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what *have* you had? . . . Live, live!"

To an imaginative European, who is unfamiliar with the prohibitive American past and with the long-standing American habit of playing hide and seek with experience, Strether's pronouncement in favor of sheer life may well seem so commonplace as hardly to be worth the loving concentration of a major novelist. While the idea that one should "live" one's life came to James as a revelation, to the contemporary European novelists this idea had long been a completely assimilated and natural assumption; experience to them was the medium in which they tested and created values, whereas to him it represented something more than that—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

romance, reality, civilization, a self-propelling, autonomous value inexhaustibly alluring in its own right. This attitude to experience in James is often overlooked by readers who are excessively impressed (or depressed?) by his oblique methods and effects of remoteness and ambiguity. Actually, from the standpoint of the history of the national letters, the lesson taught by James in *The Ambassadors,* as in many of his other books, must be understood as no less than a revolutionary appeal. It is a veritable declaration of the rights of man—not, to be sure, of the rights of the public, of the political man, but of the rights of the private man, of the rights of personality, whose openness to experience provides the sole effective guaranty of its development.

Strether's appeal, in curiously elaborated, varied, as well as ambivalent forms, pervades all of James's work; and for purposes of critical symbolisation it might well be regarded as the compositional key to the whole modern movement in American writing. No literature, it might be said, takes on the qualities of a truly national body of expression unless it is possessed by a basic theme and unifying principle of its own. Thus the German creative mind has in the main been actuated by philosophical interests, the French by the highest ambitions of the intelligence unrestrained by system or dogma, the Russian by the passionately candid questioning and shaping of values. And since Whitman and James the American creative mind, seizing at last upon what had long been denied to it, has found the terms and objects of its activity in the urge toward and immersion in experience. It is this search for experience, conducted on diverse and often conflicting levels of consciousness, which has been the dominant, quintessential theme of the characteristic American literary productions—from *Leaves of Grass* to *Winesburg, Ohio* and beyond; and the more typically American the writer—a figure like Thomas Wolfe is a patent example—the more deeply does it engulf him.

More adequately, I believe, than any other factor that could be cited, it is this preoccupation that accounts for some of the striking peculiarities of modern American writing: its unique indifference, for instance, to the larger cultural aims implicit in the esthetic rendering of experience—to theories of value, to the wit of the speculative and problematical, and to ideas generally. In his own peculiar way even an artist as supremely aware as James

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—who was the analyst of fine consciences but scarcely of fine minds —shared this indifference. The intellectual is the only character missing in the American novel, which contains everything except ideas. But what are ideas? At best judgments of reality and at worst substitutes for it. The American novelist's conversion to reality, however, has been so belated that he cannot but be baffled by judgments and vexed by substitutes.

The American novel exhibits a singular pattern consisting, on the one hand, of a disinclination to thought and, on the other, of an intense predilection for the real: and the real it conceives as a vast phenomenology swept by waves of sensation and feeling. In this welter there is little room for the intellect, which in the unconscious belief of many imaginative Americans is naturally impervious, if not actually inimical, to reality. Consider the literary qualities of Ernest Hemingway, for example. There is nothing Hemingway despises more than experience of a make-believe, vague, or frigid nature, but in order to safeguard himself against the counterfeit he consistently avoids drawing upon the more abstract resources of the mind, he snubs the thinking man and mostly confines himself to the depiction of life on its physical levels. Of course, his extraordinary mastery of the sensuous element amply compensates for whatever losses he may sustain in other spheres. But Hemingway is only a particular instance. Other writers, less gifted and not so self-sufficiently and incisively one-sided as he is, have through this same creative psychology come to grief. Under its conditioning some of them have produced work so limited to the recording of the immediately apparent and unmistakably and recurrently real that it can truly be said of them that their art ends exactly where it should begin.

"How can one make the best of one's life?" André Malraux asks in one of his novels. "By converting as wide a range of experience as possible into conscious thought." It is precisely this reply which is alien to the typical American artist, who is so utterly absorbed in experience that he is often satisfied to let it "write its own ticket"—to carry him to its own chance or casual destination.

2.

The disunity of American literature, its polar division into above and below or highbrow and lowbrow writing, has been noted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more than once. Whitman and James, who form a kind of fatal antipodes, have repeatedly served as the standard examples of this dissociation. There is one sense, however, in which the contrast between these two arch-typical Americans might be said to have been overdrawn. There is, after all, a common ground on which they finally, though perhaps briefly, meet—an essential Americanism subsuming them both that is best defined by their mutual affirmation of experience. True, what one affirmed the other was apt to negate; still it is not in their attitude to experience as such that the difference between them becomes crucial but rather in their contradictory conceptions of what constitutes experience. One sought its ideal manifestations in America, the other in Europe. Whitman, plunging with characteristic heedlessness into the turbulent, formless life of the frontier and of the big cities, accepted experience in its total ungraded state, whereas James, insisting on a precise scrutiny of its origins and conditions, was endlessly discriminatory, thus carrying forward his ascetic inheritance into the very act of reaching out for the charms and felicities of the great European world. But the important thing to keep in mind here is that this plebeian and patrician are historically associated in the radical enterprise of subverting, each from his own end, the puritan code of stark utility in the conduct of life and in releasing the long compressed springs of experience in the national letters. In this sense, Whitman and James are the true initiators of the American line of modernity.

If a positive approach to experience is the touchstone of the modern, a negative approach is the touchstone of the classic in American writing. The literature of early America is a sacred rather than a profane literature. Immaculately spiritual at the top and local and anecdotal at the bottom, it is essentially, as the genteel literary historian Barrett Wendell accurately noted, a "record of the national inexperience" marked by "an instinctive disregard of actual fact." For this reason it largely left untouched the two chief experiential media—the novel and the drama. Brockden Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville were "romancers" rather than novelists. They were incapable of apprehending the vitally new principle of realism by virtue of which the art of fiction in Europe was in their time rapidly evolving toward an hitherto inconceivable condition of objectivity and familiarity with existence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Not until James did a fiction-writer appear in America who was able to sympathise with and hence to take advantage of the methods of Thackeray, Balzac, and Turgenev. Since the principle of realism presupposes a thoroughly secularized relationship between the ego and experience, Hawthorne and Melville could not possibly have apprehended it. Though not religious men themselves, they were nevertheless held in bondage by ancestral conscience and dogma, they were still living in the afterglow of a religious faith that drove the ego, on its external side, to aggrandize itself by accumulating practical sanctions while scourging and inhibiting its intimate side. In Hawthorne the absent or suppressed experience reappears in the shape of spectral beings whose function is to warn, repel, and fascinate. And the unutterable confusion that reigns in some of Melville's narratives (*Pierre, Mardi*), and which no amount of critical labor has succeeded in clearing up, is primarily due to his inability either to come to terms with experience or else wholly and finally to reject it.

Despite the featureless innocence and moral-enthusiastic air of the old American books, there is in some of them a peculiar virulence, a feeling of discord that does not easily fit in with the general tone of the classic age. In such worthies as Irving, Cooper, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, and Lowell there is scarcely anything more than meets the eye, but in Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville there is an incandescent symbolism, a meaning within meaning, the vitality of which is perhaps only now being rightly appreciated. D. H. Lawrence was close to the truth when he spoke of what serpents they were, of the "inner diabolism of their underconsciousness." Hawthorne, "that blue-eyed darling," as well as Poe and Melville, insisted on a subversive vision of human nature at the same time as cultivated Americans were everywhere relishing the orations of Emerson who, as James put it, was helping them "to take a picturesque view of one's internal possibilities and to find in the landscape of the soul all sorts of fine sunrise and moonlight effects." Each of these three creative men displays a healthy resistance to the sentimentality and vague idealism of his contemporaries; and along with this resistance they display morbid qualities that, aside from any specific biographical factors, might perhaps be accounted for by the contradiction between the poverty of the experience provided by the society they lived in and the high

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

development of their normal, intellectual, and affective natures—though in Poe's case there is no need to put any stress on his moral character. And the curious thing is that whatever faults their work shows are reversed in later American literature, the weaknesses of which are not to be traced to poverty of experience but to an inability to encompass it on a significant level.

The dilemma that confronted these early writers chiefly manifests itself in their frequent failure to integrate the inner and outer elements of their world so that they might stand witness for each other by way of the organic linkage of object and symbol, act and meaning. For that is the linkage of art without which its structure cannot stand. Lawrence thought that *Moby Dick* is profound *beyond* human feeling—which in a sense says as much against the book as for it. Its further defects are dispersion, a divided mind: its real and transcendental elements do not fully interpenetrate, the creative tension between them is more fortuitous than organic. In *The Scarlet Letter* as in a few of his shorter fictions, and to a lesser degree in *The Blithedale Romance,* Hawthorne was able to achieve an imaginative order that otherwise eluded him. A good deal of his writing, despite his gift for precise observation, consists of phantasy unsupported by the conviction of reality.

Many changes had to take place in America before its spiritual and material levels could fuse in a work of art in a more or less satisfactory manner. Whitman was already in the position to vivify his democratic ethos by an appeal to the physical features of the country, such as the grandeur and variety of its geography, and to the infinite detail of common lives and occupations. And James too, though sometimes forced to resort to makeshift situations, was on the whole successful in setting up a lively and significant exchange between the moral and empiric elements of his subject-matter. Though he was, in a sense, implicitly bound all his life by the morality of Hawthorne, James none the less perceived what the guilt-tossed psyche of the author of *The Marble Faun* prevented him from seeing—that it is not the man trusting himself to experience but the one fleeing from it who suffers the "beast in the jungle" to rend him.

The transcendentalist movement is peculiar in that it expresses the native tradition of inexperience in its particulars and the revolutionary urge to experience in its generalities. (Perhaps that is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what Van Wyck Brooks meant when, long before prostrating himself at his shrine, he wrote that Emerson was habitually abstract where he should be concrete, and vice versa.) On a purely theoretical plane, in ways curiously inverted and idealistic, the cult of experience is patently prefigured in Emerson's doctrine of the uniqueness and infinitude, as well as in Thoreau's equally steep estimate, of the private man. American culture was then unprepared for anything more drastic than an affirmation of experience in theory alone, and even the theory was modulated in a semi-clerical fashion so as not to set it in too open an opposition to the dogmatic faith that, despite the decay of its theology, still prevailed in the ethical sphere. No wonder, then, that Transcendentalism declared itself most clearly and dramatically in the form of the essay—a form in which one can preach without practicing.

Isolation was the price Whitman and James were compelled to pay for their break with the tradition of inexperience. James was protected somewhat by his social tone and expatriate interests, but Whitman suffered the full penalty of his iconoclasm. W. D. Howells survived by assuming the role of mediator between the old and the new. But it was not until the twentieth century that the urge to experience at last overwhelmed and decisively transformed literary art.

3.

Personal liberation from social taboos and conventions was the war-cry of the group of writers that came to the fore in the second decade of the century. They employed a variety of means to formulate and press home this program. Dreiser's tough-minded though somewhat arid naturalism, Anderson's softer and spottier method articulating the protest of shut-in people, Lewis's satires of Main Street, Cabell's florid celebrations of pleasure, Edna Millay's emotional expansiveness, Mencken's worldly wisdom and assaults on the provincial pieties, the early Van Wyck Brooks's high-minded though bitter evocations of the inhibited past, his ideal of creative self-fulfilment—all these were weapons brought to bear by the party of rebellion in the struggle to gain free access to experience. And the secret of energy in that struggle seems to have been the longing for what was then called "sexual freedom"; for at the time Americans seeking emancipation were engaged in a truly elemental discovery of sex whose literary expression on some levels, as Ran-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dolph Bourne remarked, easily turned into "caricatures of desire." The novel, the poem, the play—all contributed to the development of a complete symptomatology of sexual frustration and release. In retrospect much of this literature seems but a naive inversion of the dear old American innocence, a turning inside out of inbred fear and reticence, but the qualities one likes about it are its positiveness of statement, its zeal, and its pathos of the limited view.

The concept of experience was then still an undifferentiated whole. But as the desire for personal liberation, even if only from the less compulsive social pressures, was partly gratified and the tone of the literary revival changed from eagerness to disdain, the sense of totality gradually wore itself out. Since the 1920's a process of atomization of experience has forced each of its spokesmen into a separate groove from which he can step out only at the risk of utterly disorienting himself. Thus, to cite some random examples, poetic technique became the special experience of Ezra Pound, language that of Gertrude Stein, the concrete object was appropriated by W. C. Williams, super-American phenomena by Sandburg and related nationalists, Kenneth Burke experienced ideas (which is by no means the same as thinking them), Archibald MacLeish experienced public attitudes, F. Scott Fitzgerald the glamor of the very rich, Hemingway death and virile sports, and so on and so forth. Finally Thomas Wolfe plunged into a chaotic recapitulation of the cult of experience as a whole, traversing it in all directions and ending nowhere.

Though the crisis of the 1930's arrested somewhat the progress of the experiential mode, it nevertheless managed to put its stamp on the entire social-revolutionary literature of the decade. A comparison of European and American left-wing writing of the same period will at once show that whereas Europeans like Malraux and Silone enter deeply into the meaning of political ideas and beliefs, Americans touch only superficially on such matters, as actually their interest is fixed almost exclusively on the class war as an experience which, to them at least, is new and exciting. They succeed in representing incidents of oppression and revolt, as well as sentimental conversions, but conversions of the heart and mind they merely sketch in on the surface or imply in a gratuitous fashion. (What does a radical novel like *The Grapes of Wrath* contain, from an ideological point of view, that agitational jour-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nalism cannot communicate with equal heat and facility? Surely its vogue cannot be explained by its radicalism. Its real attraction for the millions who read it lies elsewhere—perhaps in its vivid recreation of a "slice of life" so horrendously unfamiliar that it can be made to yield an exotic interest.) The sympathy of these presumably political writers with the revolutionary cause is often genuine, yet their understanding of its inner movement, intricate problems, and doctrinal and strategic motives is so deficient as to call into question their competence to deal with political material. In the complete works of the so-called proletarian school you will not find a single viable portrait of a Marxist intellectual or of any character in the revolutionary drama who, conscious of his historical role, is not a mere automation of spontaneous class force or impulse. What really happened in the 1930's is that due to certain events the public aspects of experience appeared more meaningful than its private aspects, and literature responded accordingly. But the subject of political art is *history*, which stands in the same relation to experience as fiction to biography: and just as surely as failure to generalise the biographical element thwarts the aspirant to fiction, so the ambition of the literary Left to create a political art was thwarted by its failure to lift experience to the level of history.*

Experience is the main but by no means the total substance of literature. The part experience plays in the esthetic sphere might well be compared to the part that the materialist conception of history assigns to economy. Experience, in the sense of this analogy, is the substructure of literature above which there rises a superstructure of values, ideas, and judgments—in a word, of the multiple forms of consciousness. But this base and summit are not stationary: they continually act and react upon each other.

It is precisely this superstructural level which is seldom reached by the typical American writer of the modern era. Most of the well-known reputations will bear out my point. Whether you approach a poet like Ezra Pound or novelists like Steinbeck and

*For the benefit of those people who habitually pause to insist on what they call "strictly literary values," I might add that by "history" in this connection I do not mean "history-books" or anything resembling what is known as the "historical novel" or drama. A political art would succeed in lifting experience to the level of history if its perception of life—any life—were organised around a perspective relating the artist's sense of the *society* of the dead to his sense of the *society* of the living and the as yet unborn.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Faulkner, what is at once noticeable is the uneven, and at times quite distorted, development of the various elements that constitute literary talent. What is so exasperating about Pound's poetry, for example, is its peculiar combination of a finished technique (his special share in the distribution of experience) with amateurish and irresponsible ideas. It could be maintained that for sheer creative power Faulkner is hardly excelled by any living novelist, yet who would seriously compare him to Mann or Joyce? The diversity and intensity of the experience represented in his narratives cannot make up for their lack of order, of a self-illuminating structure, and for their irksome obscurity of value and meaning.* One might naturally counter this criticism by stating that though Faulkner rarely or never sets forth values directly, they none the less exist in his work by implication. Yes, but implications incoherently expressed are no better than mystifications, and nowadays it is values that we can least afford to take on faith. Moreover, in a more startling manner perhaps than any of his contemporaries, Faulkner illustrates the tendency of the experiential mode, if pursued to its utmost extreme, to turn into its opposite through unconscious self-parody. In Faulkner the excess, the systematic inflation of the horrible is such a parody of experience. In Thomas Wolfe the same effect is produced by his swollen rhetoric and by his compulsion to repeat himself—and repetition is an obvious form of parody. This repetition-compulsion has plagued a good many American writers. Its first and most conspicuous victim, of course, was Whitman, who also occasionally slipped into unintentional parodies of himself.

Yet there is a positive side to the primacy of experience in late American literature. For this primacy has conferred certain benefits upon it, of which none is more bracing than its relative immunity from abstraction and otherworldliness. The stream of life, unimpeded by the rocks and sands of ideology, flows through it freely. If inept in coping with the general, it particularizes not at all badly; and the assumptions of sanctity that so many European artists seem to require as a kind of guaranty of their professional standing are not readily conceded in the lighter and clearer American atmosphere. "Whatever may have been the case in years

*His most recent novel, *The Hamlet*, includes so many imaginative marvels that one is appalled by the ease with which it nevertheless runs aground.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gone by," Whitman wrote in 1888, "the true use for the imaginative faculty of modern times is to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing, and to real things only." As this statement was intended as a prophecy, it is worth noting that while the radiant endowments that Whitman speaks of—the "glows and glories and final illustriousness"—have not been granted, the desired and predicted vivification of facts, science, and common lives has in a measure been realized, though in the process Whitman's democratic faith has as often been belied as confirmed.

4.

It is not the mere recoil from the inhibitions of puritan and neo-puritan times that instigated the American search of experience. Behind it is the extreme individualism of a country without a long past to brood on, whose bourgeois spirit had not worn itself out and been debased in a severe struggle against an old culture so tenacious as to retain the power on occasion to fascinate and render impotent even its predestined enemies. Moreover, in contrast to the derangements that have continually shaken Europe, life in the United States has been relatively fortunate and prosperous. It is possible to speak of American history as a "successful" history. Within the limits of the capitalist order—and until the present period the objective basis for a different social order simply did not exist here—the American people have been able to find definitive solutions for the great historical problems that faced them. Thus both the Revolutionary and Civil War were complete actions that once and for all abolished the antagonisms which had initially caused the breakdowns of national equilibrium. In Europe similar actions have usually led to festering compromises that in the end reproduced the same conflicts in other forms.

It is plain that in America there has really been no urgent need for high intellectual productivity. Indeed, the American intelligentsia developed very slowly as a semi-independent grouping; and what is equally important, for more than a century now and especially since 1865, it has been kept at a distance from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

machinery of social and political power.* What this means is that insofar as it has been deprived of certain opportunities, it has also been sheltered and pampered. There was no occasion or necessity for the intervention of the intellectuals—it was not mentality that society needed most in order to keep its affairs in order. On the whole the intellectuals were left free to cultivate private interests, and, once the moral and esthetic ban on certain types of exertion had been removed, uninterruptedly to solicit individual experience. It is this lack of a sense of extremity and many-sided involvement which explains the peculiar shallowness of a good deal of American literary expression. If some conditions of insecurity have been known to retard and disarm the mind, so have some conditions of security. The question is not whether Americans have suffered less than Europeans, but of the quality of whatever suffering and happiness have fallen to their lot.

The consequence of all this has been that American literature has tended to make too much of private life, to impose on it, to scour it for meanings that it cannot always legitimately yield. Henry James was the first to make a cause, if not a fetish, of personal relations; and the justice of his case, despite his vaunted divergence from the pioneer type, is that of a pioneer too, for while Americans generally were still engaged in "gathering in the preparations and necessities" he resolved to seek out the "amenities and consummations." Furthermore, by exploiting in a fashion altogether his own the contingencies of private life that fell within his scope, he was able to dramatize the relation of the new world to the old, thus driving the wedge of historical consciousness into the very heart of the theme of experience. Later not a few attempts were made to combine experience with consciousness, to achieve the balance of thought and being characteristic of the great traditions of European art. But except for certain narratives of James, I know of very little American fiction which can unqualifiedly be said to have attained this end.

Since the decline of the regime of gentility many admirable works have been produced, but in the main it is the quantity of

*The situation in this respect has changed considerably during the last decade. The New Deal government is the first administration since the early days of the Republic that has shown any disposition to avail itself of the particular gifts of the intelligentsia.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt life comprised in them that satisfies, not their quality of belief or interpretive range. In poetry there is evidence of more distinct gains, perhaps because the medium has reached that late stage in its evolution when its chance of survival depends on its capacity to absorb ideas. The modern poetic styles—metaphysical and symbolist—depend on a conjunction of feeling and idea. But, generally speaking, bare experience is still the *Leitmotif* of the American writer, though the literary depression of recent years tends to show that this theme is virtually exhausted. At bottom it was the theme of the individual transplanted from an old culture taking inventory of himself and of his new surroundings. This inventory, this initial recognition and experiencing of oneself and one's surroundings, is all but complete now, and those who persist in going on with it are doing so out of mere routine and inertia.

The creative power of the cult of experience is almost spent, but what lies beyond it is still unclear. One thing, however, is certain: whereas in the past, throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, the nature of American literary life was largely determined by national forces, now it is international forces that have begun to exert a dominant influence. And in the long run it is in the terms of this historic change that the future course of American writing will define itself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Death of Leon Trotsky

Paul Goodman

1.

What burnt? A meteor blinding close?
Or a premonitory comet
that will in fifty years return and burn?
Or an artificial light i' the house!

The strangest mourning-song of a dead hero
with an ambiguous heart I begin:
Trotsky to the death he fiercely hated
was given struggling still;
meantime we are suspicious, tentatively
excited weigh the evidence,
deeply stirred on one hypothesis.

2.

In France, in Norway, in a duel world-wide,
in mighty States by wit and private arms
he warded off the murder day by day.

This was a hunt under peculiar rules:
a solitary fugitive most often
cannot remain alive.

In such an article, in such a speech
is heard the rhythms and the outcries
expressing being at bay.

The initiative is the assassin's
the initiative is always the assassin's
every night and day the initiative is the assassin's.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3.

Now is the time to grieve or rejoice
or be complacent; to finally give up;
to shrug. Also to take advantage,
for loyalty or pragmatically,
of the name, of the corpse (who can condemn it?)
Also to reserve judgment (who can condemn it?)
for a week, for a year, for history,
to institute another inquiry.
To choose the style of ambiguity
in order to tell the feelings o' the heart
(who can condemn it?) Now is the time to shrug
(who can condemn it?)

4.

If the time was as Lev Davidovitch said,
now now is the time to mourn,
for the inventor of insurrection is dead,
moveless lies the chief of excitement
and the infernal machine
everywhere doesn't know when to explode.

If the documents are authenticated
and if the facts confirm the theory,
now now is the time to curse ourselves,
not because our statesman is dead—
but ask, What time is it? August 1940!
—if France could have been freed in 1936!
if Russia could have been freed in 1926!

This mourning isn't fatal; in his books
there is a next step; on his dying lips
there was an urgent call.

But if all o' this was lies, as may be,
spite and self-deception, even likely!
Is not the man who used to have the power
betrayed into desperate adventures,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the final hero-crimes? The mania
in the end is obvious, when to go forward
is easier than back or hold,
until the last minority of fractions
is estranged (tho God forbid I should repeat
the invective of hyenas).—
Yet what heroic perfidy! to even
the sentence on the deathbed, first conceived
in a wild imagination of the scene,
and now whispered mechanically, for whom?

But if neither truth nor lies, but only error
we in this unprophetic man believed,
if all are in danger for another reason
and are dying in a different war,
nor is the end desirable we hoped
nor would (thank God) the method lead to it—
now is the time to be at a loss
for an explanation of disaster,
a next step, a right feeling,
a next step.

In what vulgarity (I'd sooner die
than think) are some of us now picking
to be at a loss in August 1940
for at least an explanation of disaster!
never to mention a next step, a right feeling.

What vulgarity, to accomplish what
catastrophe, is broadcast now?

5.

Nevertheless! nevertheless!
our hero's glorious
  because the present hour
  was never in his power;

at most, at worst
(the poet may securely boast)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he didn't form the society
nor ratify the treaty;

it was not he who set the time
to guarantee the maximum
of disaster; and the famous plot
before its moment was cut short.

6.

The form of life, the form of dissidence
is by a hatchet-blow destroyed;
moveless lies the chief of excitement
and the voluble speech is mute.

Of those who long to live an hour longer,
who fight to live that hour close to death
—how recklessly and fiercely he cringed
from the ending he methodically sought!
Now moveless lies the chief of excitement
and the voluble speech is mute.

But praise to God there is an insurrection
of the heart and of the forebrain overworked
against the nervousness and the desire
and all humanity and policy;
not rallying to the requirement
—this is Freedom: can the tyranny
set itself up again? No no!

Shall not we, brothers, for a moment still
all living fears in praise of freedom death,
of peace and freedom death? Oh ought we not
declare a little act of peace for him
at last when he cannot dissent again?
Let's praise no uncertain victory,
no limited freedom and no armistice,
but absolute absolute absolute,
given to us and not made by us

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(tho many lend a hand). This victory's small
—nobody would deny it to any—
nor is it hypothetical.

7.

When Trotsky was dead in Coyoacan on the 3rd day after the finally successful assault, an attempt was made by Albert Goldman and other American Trotskyist leaders to bring the body to New York, to the Empire City, for a great public funeral and demonstration. (There was also dissent among these leaders, for a few had just led the secession from the party of nearly half of the American members of the Fourth International.)

The State Department of the United States, however, which had previously denied entrance to Trotsky himself, would by no means permit the importation of the body, to become an object not only of insurrectionary ardor on the part of some, but of contention and perhaps open street-fighting between Trotskyists and Stalinists in New York. For a moment Goldman intended to appeal this decision to the highest courts. But in the end the body was burned in fire and the ashes given over to Trotsky's widow.

8.

A Hebrew Song, in Memory of L. T.

Our land we work
our land we work

we have already ploughed it
and we have seeded it,

have not yet harvested
have not yet harvested.

1940

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oxford in the Twenties*

Louis MacNeice

IN THE SUMMER of 1926 the English general strike occurred and was broken. The most publicized blacklegs were the undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge who regarded the strike as an occasion for a spree; a comic phenomenon due to the Lower Classes; a comet that came from nowhere and dissolved in rubble and presaged nothing to come.

In the fall of that year I went up to Oxford to continue my classical education. This traditional English form of education is rooted in that same class system which conduces to an ethics of self-interest; it thus came about that when I was nineteen I joined to a dislike of science a disbelief in altruism. Skimming the cream off the milk; skimming the cream off the cream; you begin to forget there are cows. I had been specializing in Classics since the age of fifteen when I had ceased to study any branch of mathematics, science, modern history or modern languages. While at Oxford I took only two examinations—'Honour Mods' and 'Greats.' These examinations are still invested with glamor although the first involves a great deal of futile memorization and the second encourages jargon and false profundity. Being a natural examinee, i.e. an intellectual window-dresser, I succeeded in both; for Mods I stored up some textual emendations by Wilamowitz or Scaliger, for Greats I dragged in my own pet theories on a leash.

I did not, however, go to Oxford to study; that was what grammar school boys did. We products of the English public schools (which correspond to private schools in America) went to Oxford either for sport and beer-drinking, in which case we filled in time deriding the intellectuals, or for the aesthetic life and cocktails, in which case we filled in time deriding the athletes; our feuds were between ourselves for the grammar school boys did not enter

*This article—with certain alterations, condensations and omissions—is an excerpt from a book entitled *The Strings Are False*, to be published in America next year by the Oxford University Press.—THE EDITORS.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the picture (they were to enter it after the Slump, when Oxford discovered politics).

Oxford in 1926 was just at the end of its period of post-war deliberate decadence—the careful matching of would-be putrescent colors. At the first party I went to there was no drink but champagne, a young man played by himself with a spotted stuffed dog on a string and the air was full of the pansy phrase 'my dear.' I discovered that in Oxford homosexuality and 'intelligence,' heterosexuality and brawn, were almost inexorably paired. This left me out in the cold and I took to drink.

Coming of a temperance family, drunkenness had always been for me a symbol of freedom. It was a kicking overboard of the lumber of puritan ethics; it was a quick road to fantasy; it achieved a communion among those whom sobriety divided. I had heard a temperance lecturer explain that alcohol impairs the mind through weakening the synapses of the brain and I was willing to believe this; we have more mind than is comfortable anyway, the same again and to hell with the synapses. And the distortions of drunkenness made objects more real, more 'significant,' even on a morning after emphasizing, as Picasso did, the jugness of the jug and the bowlness of the bowl. A friend of mine told me that he felt the same way when he had a bad cold; he recovered that vividness of visual objects which we all had had as children and had lost. We continued to envy or think we envied children.

After the first exultation of having two rooms of my own and listening to the crickets in the college kitchen and watching the Jacobean buildings turn plum-coloured at tea-time, I became depressed by Oxford. The climate was muggy and there were none of the geniuses around that there ought to be. I used to get up very late and cut my lectures, because the lecturers were inaudible or dull. I hated my tutorials—the endless interpolation into Greek compositions of phrases carefully collected from writers of the proper period; I thought that was a game for the 'monsters,' i.e. the grammar school boys, those distorted little creatures with black teeth who held their forks by the middle and were set on making a career. I used to sit wedged between these monsters at dinner, listening superciliously as they discussed Noel Coward and Bernard Shaw; in my opinion no one intelligent would mention such writers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My snobbery left me lonely in a small college which contained comparatively few public schoolboys and still fewer 'intellectuals.' The person I liked best was my 'scout'—the servant who brought me my meals and supposedly made my bed. He was a tiny elf, seventy years old, with a greasy bowler hat, a thick moustache and a chuckle; he was always telling me stories which were built up carefully to a climax; when the climax came he would shut himself out of the room, timing the bang of the door to endorse his wit. He used to romanticize about the landscape of Devonshire—'dead red cows on dead green grass'—and had seen the moon under an arch at Tintern Abbey. Like most college servants he was a money snob and liked to see people entertaining, used the word 'gentleman' very often and thought that the old days were better—the days when the Warden was the *Honorable* Brodrick and the future Lord Birkenhead, being tutor of History, got drunk every night and hung up his trousers over the pictures on the wall. Both of them real gentlemen. When my scout heard that my sister was becoming a doctor he said: 'Funny thing that, sir, the way brains runs in families.' 'Like wooden legs' he added and shut the door on himself with a bang and a chuckle. He was very charming but a parody; Oxford with its Fellows and scouts and tradespeople is as full of walking parodies as any Anglo-Indian club. Nature in England has a way of imitating *Punch.*

The servants varied from college to college. In Magdalen and Christ Church the scouts were like Hollywood manorial butlers; in the more plebeian colleges they were often like caricatures by Rowlandson of innkeepers or ostlers. Under the scouts in all colleges there was a host of menials, many of them badly paid. A surprising number of these looked half-witted; their features were often wildly haphazard, their bloodshot eyes splodged askew on their faces, their mouths unable to shut, hair growing out of their ears. Some of them were lobster-red from drink, others decayed as if from centuries of malnutrition. Their gait too was abnormal—slouching or walking crab-wise, cow-hocked or bandy or sagging at the knees. Like an inbred race apart—superannuated relics of the Dickensian tavern or poorhouse, apes in green baize aprons. And oozing out of them all a traditional automatic sycophancy—a leering, smug, half imbecile, half cunning, self-abasing conscious-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness of class. Themselves barely articulate they gauged the undergraduates by accent.

As for the dons they might just as well have been at Cambridge; I should hardly have missed them. Few of them were interested in teaching. They lived in a parlor up a winding stair and caught little facts like flies in webs of generalization. For recreation they read detective stories. The cigar smoke of the Senior Common Rooms hid them from each other and from the world. Some of them had never been adult, their second childhood having come too early. Some of them had never been male, walked around in their gowns like blowsy widows or wizened spinsters. They had charm without warmth and knowledge without understanding.

In appearance they were nearly as grotesque as the menials. There were exceptions of course, maybe the exceptions were a majority, but for me at least it was the grotesques who typified Oxford. When I think of Oxford dons I see a Walpurgisnacht, a zoo—scraggy-necked baldheads in gown and hood looking like marabou storks, giant turtles reaching for a glass of port with infinitely weary flippers, sad chimpanzees, codfish, washing blown out on a line. Timid with pimples or boisterous with triple chins. Their wit and themselves had been kept too long; the squibs were damp, the cigars were dust, the champagne was flat.

But in spite of, and partly because of, all this I am grateful to Oxford. Four years' free time is four years' free time and it is an additional blessing to spend it somewhere where there are books and ideas in circulation. I have never yet come across an educational institution which was not largely absurd; in Oxford the absurdities had a shape and a patina that were stimulating. And our classical education, which seemed rather useless at the time, compares very well, I have since discovered, with that all-round, useful, sensible, modern education that equips you for everything and nothing; I doubt whether education *ought* to be 'useful' or 'sensible.' In particular the Oxford tradition of Socratic argument may have led us nowhere but it gave us a weapon we should never have got from a crammer. And it is a weapon one needs in this world of wishful thinking. For my own taste the Oxford intellect was too dry but at least it was articulate; other universities with no more red blood in their veins have a good deal more water on the brain.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When the tourist thinks of Oxford he thinks of the colleges. Living in the colleges ourselves we found it more amusing to explore the poor streets which smell of fried fish or the residential district of North Oxford with its neo-Gothic architecture and its population of cranks. Anyone driving into Oxford from the north could know where he was from the spectacle of fanatical and fantastic old maids upon bicycles, in mushroom hats and shapeless timeless clothes. Ecclesiastical porches, baronial turrets, bad stained glass in the lavatory window; the Englishman's home is his ragbag. I visited three homes in North Oxford during my first term. One belonged to an aggressive hypochondriac old lady who, as soon as she met me, said: 'I hear you're a clever young man. Are you interested in Peter Piperisms?' In another house Graham Shepard and I were entertained by a don and—more entertainingly —by his wife who made her whole conversation out of sexual doubles entendres; she had a dog and a canary to help her out.

The third house I visited by mistake, having found in my room in college a note of invitation intended for an undergraduate who was a Plymouth Brother. Arriving at the unknown house I found myself in the midst of Plymouth Brethren—young men in dark Sunday suits and stiff collars and dowdy girl undergraduates mainly in spectacles and with clumsy embarrassed hands. The room was full of cake-stands and suspense and suddenly everyone stood up and Mr. Moore, our host, a genial, cunning old man, began praying in an over-familiar way which implied that we and God were all one jolly family. Then we ate. Mr. Moore was puzzled by my presence but he took me into a corner and said I was welcome all the same and would I come again, they did this every Sunday; there was a young man from the Colonies, he said, a very fine athlete, who had told him just before he went down that there had been moments during his university career when he felt like going wrong but, whenever these temptations arose, he used to say to himself 'I'll just go up and have a cup of coffee with old Moore' and the situation was saved.

At this time one of the popular songs was *Red, Red Robin,* which like many jazz songs combined the nostalgia of the thwarted with the philosophy of 'Whistle owre the lave o' 't.' When the red red robin comes bob, bob, bobbin' along. There'll be no more sobbin' etc. The choice for many undergraduates was between this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Old Moore or some other form of naive and self-gratulatory religion. There were many Anglo-Catholics. One of these was a tall, gross young man with a sweeping Jewish nose, rich wet lips and a wish to convert people. He kept saying 'My dear, my dear,' and, when he neared the sacred topic, his bosom would expand like a prima donna's; he wanted the limelight and cultivated people with reputations, especially bad ones. He used to say: 'I can't bear Jews; I suppose it's because I have a very slight strain [sic] of Jewish blood in me myself.' When he left Oxford he did arduous and efficient slum-work in the East End of London, afterwards entered the church and spent some time in India in association with Gandhi, evolving in place of his early passion for purple and candles a program of Christian socialism.

Graham Shepard and I and most of our friends regarded all persons who had any religious faith as museum specimens. We did not deplore their existence any more than we deplored the existence of the absurd buildings by Butterfield in Christ Church and Merton or the existence of the would-be county families around Graham's home in Surrey. Without this cast of grotesques the world would be dull. For in every sphere we had a perverse taste for the grotesque.

For instance we used to organize readings of plays such as *The Jew of Malta* or *The White Devil* in a room lit by candles stuck in beer-bottles and a skull on the table with radishes in its eye-sockets. We bought strange fruits such as persimmons and passion-fruit and I got myself an ashplant in order to be like Stephen Dedalus and trained it to carry tram-tickets in its mouth. Going to a concert by the Dolmetsch family I tried to induce a trance-state and, while listening to the harpsichord, secured a picture of a chimpanzee hobbling along a street, holding above its head a large metal basin into which people were throwing coins from the windows.

In the summer, when Graham and I shared a canoe, instead of going up the Cherwell as was the custom, we used to paddle along the evil-smelling canal through the slums or up the Isis past the gas-drums. One May morning in 1927 we were on this stretch of the Isis watching a dragon-fly among the cow-parsley and shards on the bank when a goods train came over the railway bridge and we made a chant out of the names on the trucks—Hickleton, Hickle-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ton, Hickleton, Lunt, Hickleton, Longbotham. This incantation of names at once became vastly symbolic—symbolic of an idle world of oily sunlit water and willows and willows' reflections and, mingled with the idleness, a sense of things worn out, scrap-iron and refuse, the shadow of the gas-drum, this England. Hickleton Hickleton Hickleton—the long train clanked and rumbled as if it had endless time to reach wherever it was going. The placid dotage of a great industrial country.

Graham and I were always searching for phrases. The right phrase was something with positive, or even absolute, value—even if, as so often, it was conveying denunciation, irony, scepticism, defeatism, nihilism. (If Nil is a word it can't be nil.) Our experiences with words being a long way ahead of our experience, we accepted ideas with much less discrimination than we accepted phrases. Reading William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* we said 'That's that.' There were no flies on Graham or me; we saw through the whole damn peepshow.

While we expressed a contempt for Oxford our world remained Oxonian. Only occasionally something came in from outside. Thus one day Graham and I were sitting by the fire in my room when a foreign voice said 'Excuse me' and there in the doorway was a seedy little man in a green slouch hat who looked like a crook detective. He had yellow eyeballs and long black nails and wanted an introduction to Walter de la Mare. An adoptive German baron he was writing up English life for papers in Germany and his thick-skinned determination to get copy had already carried him into all kinds of British inner shrines. For months we were unable to get rid of him and had to listen to his sickly sentimental or unsavory man-of-the-world reminiscences—how he had seduced his best friend's wife or how he had met Lenin in Switzerland and been particularly struck by his *humanity*. One day he picked up a Swinburne and began reading aloud the Hounds of Spring in his German accent and with a fruity Germanic intensity. Some time, he said, we must go out with him and 'have a dash up channel, as they say in the navy'; he emanated a sordid sexuality. But as well as sex and alleged cosmopolitan culture he had a finger in politics, told us he was a follower of Hitler and, if Hitler got in, was booked for a Government post. At that time, 1928, we knew almost nothing of Hitler. Political ideas were those which concerned us least.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Because I had lost my religion and had not yet had a sex-life my approach to ideas was very emotional. Even when it came to metaphysics. Metaphysics for me was not something cold and abstract; it was an account of reality but an artistic account, not a scientific one. I did not believe that one system of philosophy was truer than another and thought philosophers themselves were fools in so far as they fancied they were getting to the bottom of anything; on the contrary their work was always superstructure, largely a matter of phrases, and these phrases were employed not as the physicist employs them but as the poet employs them; the philosopher's job—to use our favourite word—was stylisation, building a symphony which should sanction his emotional reactions to the universe. When you boil them down they are all alike. I found it amusing to collate a sceptic like Hume with one of the downright idealists. Hume denies the latter's Universals but he brings them back with an 'as if.' That was just eighteenth century good manners—there's no such thing as blue blood but the world must go on *as if* there was.

I tried to orchestrate my philosophical reading not only with other literature but with the random details of life. My favourite writers were the acolytes of flux or destruction; I had come up to Oxford with a belief in the Practical Joke as a principle of ethics and in the Enfant Terrible as an unacknowledged legislator. It puzzled our elders that young men who obviously had a keen sense of logic should occupy themselves so much with the byways of the Unconscious, with idiosyncrasies of manners and dress, blind alleys and baubles, rhyme without reason. Other generations of undergraduates had been silly spontaneously or by accident whereas we were silly of a set purpose—mortifying the mind as the early Christians had mortified the flesh.

We reflected a paradox in certain contemporary novelists. Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf—they give you the flux but they serve it on golden platters. I suspect it was the gold that fetched us rather than the flux, as we pretended. In Lawrence we found belief and enthusiasm, in Joyce the solid ground against which he kicked, in Woolf at least a precision of picture and cadence. In spite of our anxiety to be realist—mimesis of flux—we still fell back upon Form. What you do does not matter but how you do it; Picasso can make a picture out of anything.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In philosophy I was drawn two ways. I wanted the world to be One, to be permanent, the incarnation of an absolute Idea (though the word 'Idea' is inadequate since this Idea must be as much superintellectual as God, if there were a God, would be superhuman). At the same time any typical monistic system appeared hopelessly static, discounting Becoming as mere illusion and hamstringing human action. My tutor, one of Oxford's few remaining neo-Hegelians, maintained, in face of the pigeon-hole philosophy flourishing at Cambridge, that neither logic nor ethics could be separated from metaphysics. I found his attitude sympathetic since my instinct was to drag in ultimate reality everywhere. The attempt of semanticists to narrow philosophy to the clarification of language was in my opinion as mere a parlor game as the traditional formal logic of bottled syllogisms. Reading F. H. Bradley's 'Logic' I was delighted to find him saying that any judgment about anything whatsoever is a judgment about the Universe; I tried to suppress the feeling that in that case it becomes impossible to assess a judgment without subpoenaing the Universe (and how difficult it is to get that witness into court).

The stress laid upon Ancient Philosophy in our course repeated the pattern of our social position as public school boys; we spent a great deal of time pitting Aristotle against Plato but had no adequate foil to the school of idealism which both represent. Nobody mentioned Democritus. On this select arena of ancient idealism my sympathies were divided. The Platonic hierarchy mounting up to and subsumed under the Form of the Good inevitably appeals to anyone whose childhood has been fed on Christianity and his adolescence upon Shelley. The Form of the Good, the One, may be food or it may be dope but it stops the hunger of the waifs of Here and Now. Many people therefore are ready to plump on the One until the wind blows under the door of that supposedly sound-proof system—'But where,' says the wind coldly, 'where are the other eleven?' Aristotle, if only by contrast with Plato, appeared as the champion of the Other Eleven.

Aristotle the biologist was anxious to avoid the gulf between Being and Becoming established by Plato the mathematician. His concept of *energeia*—significant and so, in a sense, eternal movement exemplified in the time-world—was an antidote to the static and self-contained heaven of Plato's transcendent Forms. But when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you look into him you find he does not go far enough; reality, rescued from the One, is traced back to the *infima species* but not to the individual unit, while his distinction between *energeia* (significant and absolute movement) and *kinesis* (movement which is merely relative) restores the Platonic gulf that he has just been trying to fill in. Or so I thought. Aristotle allows that what is *energeia* from one angle may be *kinesis* from another but in that case, I thought, *kinesis* also should be a permanent principle whereas Aristotle supposes a highest grade in which mind thinks only itself and this he exempts from *kinesis*. Complete fusion of subject and object; a full stop; death. Being opposed to this full stop it will be seen that I was ripe for Marx whose basic thesis, translated into Aristotelian, is that *energeia* can only be achieved by the canalisation and continued control of *kinesis*. But, Marx being then hardly known in Oxford, I had resort to the flashy, dynamic idealism of Gentile's 'Mind as Pure Act.'

That the Oxford philosophers were riding for a fall has been pointed out lately in the Autobiography of the present Professor of Metaphysics who denounces their activities as merely frivolous cerebration, the desperate attempt of figures in a picture to refute their frame by ignoring it. We who were undergraduates in the Twenties were equally frivolous but more consciously desperate; we felt the frame cramping us. There is nothing to be done, however, with a frame like that but to break it and we were too young for that and England too old. Hickleton Hickleton Hickleton—the long train settled with a jolt or two in a siding and the engine was uncoupled for the night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On the Fall of Paris

Harold Rosenberg

THE LARORATORY of the twentieth century has been shut down. Let us admit, though, the rapping of the soldier's fist did not interrupt the creation of fresh wonders. For more than a decade, there had been a steady deflation of that intellectual exuberance which had sent out over the earth the waves of cubism, futurism, vorticism —and, later, dadaism, the "Russian" ballet, surrealism. Yet up to the day of the occupation, Paris had been the Holy Place of our time. The only one. Not because of its affirmative genius alone, but perhaps, on the contrary, through its passivity, which allowed it to be possessed by the searchers of every nation. By Picasso and Juan Gris, Spaniards; by Modigliani, Boccioni, Severini, Italians; by Brancusi, Roumanian; by Joyce, Irishman; by Mondrian, Dutchman; by Lipchitz, Polish Lithuanian; by Archipenko, Kandinsky, Diaghillef, Larionov, Russians; by Calder, Pound, Gertrude Stein, Man Ray, Americans; by Kupka, Czechoslovak; by Klee, Lehmbruck, Max Ernst, Germans; by Wyndham Lewis and T. E. Hulme, Englishmen . . . by all artists, students, refugees.

The Style of Today

The hospitality of this cultural Klondike might be explained as the result of a tense balance of historical forces, preventing any one class from imposing upon the city its own restricted forms and aims. Here, life seemed to be forever straining towards a new quality. Since it might be the sign of what was to come, each fresh gesture took on an immediate importance. Twentieth-century Paris was to the intellectual pioneer what nineteenth-century America had been to the economic one. This world beat a pathway to the door of the inventor—not of mousetraps, but of perspectives.

Thus Paris was the only spot where necessary blendings could be made and mellowed, where it was possible to shake up such "modern" doses as Viennese psychology, African sculpture, Ameri-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can detective stories, Russian music, neo-Catholicism, German technique, Italian desperation.

Paris represented the International of culture. To it, the city contributed something of its own physiognomy, a pleasant gift of sidewalk cafés, evening streets, shop signs, postmen's uniforms, argot, discursive female janitors. But despite this surface local color, twentieth-century art in Paris was not Parisian; in many ways it was more suited to New York or Shanghai than to this city of eighteenth-century parks and alleys. What was done in Paris demonstrated clearly and for all time that such a thing as international culture could exist. Moreover, that this culture had a definite style: the *Modern.*

A whole epoch in the history of art had come into being without regard to national values. The significance of this fact is just now becoming apparent. Ten years ago, no one would have questioned the possibility of a communication above the national, nor, consequently, of the presence of above-national elements even in the most national of art forms. Today, however, "sanity movements" everywhere are striving to line up art at the chauvinist soup kitchens. And to accomplish this, they attack the value and even the reality of Modernism and "the Paris style." National life alone is put forward as the source of all inspiration. But the Modern in literature, painting, architecture, drama, design, remains, in defiance of government bureaus or patriotic streetcleaners, as solid evidence that a creative communion sweeping across all boundaries is not out of the reach of our time.

In all his acts contemporary man seems narrow and poor. Yet, freed even for a moment, and in touch with himself, he leaps towards the marvelous in ways more various and actual than any generation of the past. In the "School of Paris," belonging to no one country, but world-wide and world-timed and pertinent everywhere, the mind of the twentieth century projected itself into possibilities that shall occupy mankind during many cycles of social adventure to come. Released in this aged and bottomless metropolis from national folk lore, national politics, national careers; detached from the family and the corporate taste; the lone individual, stripped, yet supported on every side by the vitality of other outcasts with whom it was necessary to form no permanent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ties, could experiment with everything that man today has within him of health or monstrousness: with pure intellect, revelling in the tension of a perfectly adjusted line; with the ferocious trance of the uncaused act; with the quiverings of mood and memory left by unmixed paints; with arbitrary disciplines and the catharsis they produce; with the nonsense of the street and the classics; with the moody pulps and absolute lyrics of paranoiac dreams.

Because the Modern was often inhuman, modern humanity could interpret itself in its terms. Because Paris was the opposite of the national in art, the art of every nation increased through Paris. No folk lost its integrity there; on the contrary, its artists, renewed by this magnanimous milieu, discovered in the depths of themselves what was most alive in the communities from which they had come. In Paris, American speech found its measure of poetry and eloquence. Criticism born there achieved an appreciation of American folk art and music; of the motion-picture technique of Griffiths; of the designs of New England interiors and of early Yankee machines; of the sand paintings of the Navajo; the backyard landscapes of Chicago and the East Side. Ideas spreading from this center of Europe and the world could teach a native of St. Louis, T. S. Eliot, how to deplore in European tones the disappearance of a centralized European culture—and a modern language in which to assault Modernism.

True, the Paris Modern did not represent all the claims of present-day life. Any more than its "Internationalism" meant the actual getting together of the peoples of different countries. It was inverted mental image, this Modern, with all the transitoriness and freedom from necessity of imagined things. A dream living-in-the-present and a dream world-citizenship—resting not upon a real triumph, but upon a willingness to go as far as was necessary into nothingness in order to shake off what was dead in the real. A negation of the negative.

Perhaps the wrenching of Western culture that had produced this style had been too severe, resulting in a kind of "leftism" in the field of thought, an over-defiance of the powers of the past. Science and theology had crossed boundaries in earlier centuries; the abstract had shown that it could drop from the skies; but life itself, manners, ways of speaking, acting, composing images, and planning the future, had always been imprisoned by the gravitation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the community site, where the grip of the dead was most unrelaxing. . . .

Then, suddenly, almost in the span of one generation, everything buried under ground had been brought to the surface. The perspective of the immediate had been established—or rather, a multiple perspective, in which time no longer reared up like a gravestone, or flourished like a tree, but threw up a shower of wonders at the will of the onlooker.

The urge towards a free life, in a society that every year tangled him deeper and deeper in the web of the systematic, had carried the individual too far.

So the Modern became, not a progressive historical movement, striving to bury the dead deeper, but a new sentiment of eternity and of eternal life. The cultures of the jungle, the cave, the northern ice fields, of Egypt, primitive Greece, antique China, medieval Europe, industrial America—all were given equal due.

Strange vision of an eternity that consists of sheets of time and space picked from history like cards from a pack, and constantly shuffled, arranged, scattered, regrouped, rubbed smooth, re-faced, spread in design, brushed off to the floor. An absolute of the relative, to be recreated in compositions of bits of newspaper, horsehair, classic prints, the buttocks of a South Sea Islander, petroglyphs, and arbitrary shapes suggested by the intoxication of a moment.

Thus the Paris Modern, resting on the deeply felt assumption that history could be entirely controlled by the mind, produced a no-time, and the Paris "International" a no-place. And this is as far as mankind has gone towards freeing itself from its past.

Modern art has been a series of individual explosions tearing at strata accumulated by centuries of communal inertia. In the words of one of its poets,

> The fairest monument which can be erected
> the most astonishing of all statues
> the finest and most audacious column
> the arch which is like the very prism of the rain
> are not worth the splendid and chaotic heap
> which is easily produced with a church and some dynamite.

But note: processes less spectacular than those of the Paris studios have also been steadily loosening the cultural reefs of the past. Paris has been synonymous with Modernism, in the sense of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the special style and tempo of our consciousness. But it is a mistake to see this city also as central to the modern in the larger sense, the sense in which we think of the contemporary as beginning in 1789. This larger and more fundamental span has not belonged to Paris alone. It has embraced equally the United States, South America, industrial and revolutionary China, Japan, Russia, the whole of Europe, and every spot in the world touched by contemporary civilization. Despite the fall of Paris, the social, economic, and cultural workings which define the modern epoch are active everywhere. Even the style has not vanished with the elimination of its capital: having been driven from the realm of art, it now reappears in new military and propaganda techniques. If there is a break between our lives and the kind of life existing before 1789, the debasement of the Paris of that 150 years does not imply a break of similar magnitude with the future. The world takes its shape from the modern, with consciousness or without it.

The Intellectual Form of Defeat

The cultural International had a capital, Paris. Just as, in the 1920's too, the political International had a capital, Moscow. It is a tragic irony of our epoch that these world centers were not brought together until the signing of the Franco-Soviet pact, when both were already dead. Then the two cadavers of hope embraced farcically, with mutual suspicion, and under the mutually exclusive provincial slogans: DEFENSE OF THE USSR and FRANCE FOR FRENCHMEN.

The intellectuals turned out in full dress—the "proletarians," of course, with red rosettes and suggestive smirks—to the wedding of this pair of radical ghosts. And offered themselves as anxious godfathers to its unearthly issue, the Popular Front. From that time on, it became bad luck even to recall the graves of international culture and international socialism.

Thus it was that during the Moscow Trials we learned with surprise and alarm that it was here, in America! that the greatest opposition to the criminal burlesque was being voiced.

For a hundred years poets and artists of Paris had risen as to a personal insult against the organized sadism, lies, and bad taste of the State, the Church, the Academy. Nowhere had the malice of office been more promptly raked with lucid hoaxes, verses

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of flame, cries of "J'Accuse." On the left bank, power itself was grounds enough for suspicion; and no one was thought to be less entitled to fair play than a man who had succeeded in making himself an Emperor, a Bishop, a Field Marshal, or a National Poet.

As late as 1928, Louis Aragon, soon to become the leader of the Leagues of American Writers of all nations, could still assert: "A Gentleman who wishes to stand at the summit of events: definition of a clown."

One had scarcely questioned the reception—in the city of the Communards, and of Rimbaud, Courbet, and Zola—of the stupid police pageant of Moscow, with its grotesquely staged appeal to the simpleminded of all countries—this mass assault by the nameless clerks of a State machine upon individual orators, theoreticians, writers, revolutionaries; this mockery of historical achievement more sordid than a thousand public monuments.

A few courageous men—Gide, Breton, Serge, a few others—strove to uphold the tradition of French criticism. But what "higher need" had paralyzed the conscience of non-conformist Paris?

The higher need was antifascism.

A struggle had to be undertaken, in parliament, on the streets, in the schools, the factories, the polling booths, the journals, the armed forces, against a system that would not only punish humanity for the sins of its past but also compel it to repeat them again and again.

The dead Internationals of culture and of politics went into battle with unwilling limbs. Like all organisms that have lost their potency, they sought some "practical" contrivance that would ensure the desired effect without inner expenditure.

Wearing armbands supplied by Moscow, the Paris Left adopted the style of the conventional, the sententious, the undaring, the morally lax—in the name of social duty and the "defense of culture." Feasible fronts were formed in which all the participants were forced to give up their power of action—perhaps a profound desire for this renunciation was itself the main reason for the coalitions.

Antifascist unity became everything; programs, insight, spirit, truth, nothing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of course, the "practical" is never of use in large matters, nor ever practical in a time of crisis.

To the "practical man" thought is a matter of taste. Some people enjoy Hegel, Shakespeare, Bach, Cézanne, scientific analysis, historical accuracy—others prefer mystery stories. It is all a question of how one spends his spare time; for "doing," these differences are irrelevant. Molotoff, with his "Fascism is a matter of taste," has simply given a limited formulation of the attitude taken by his type towards *all* ideas.

To defend Paris, men and slogans long discredited were restored to power. The Communists claimed the "Marseillaise" as their own, and former surrealist poets acclaimed Romain Rolland.

In this milieu, inquiry soon became not merely a matter of taste but of bad taste. Another blow by Fascist "radicalism," and it became treachery, the Fifth Column.

Meanwhile, modern formulae perfected by both Paris and Moscow in the hour of their inspiration, and now discarded, had been eagerly seized upon by Germany, and adapted to its peculiar aims. In that country, politics became a "pure (i.e. inhuman) art," independent of everything but the laws of its medium. The subject matter of this "*avant-garde*" politics was, like that of earlier art movements of Paris, the weakness, meanness, incoherence, and intoxication of modern man. Against this advanced technique, *which in itself has nothing to do with revolutionary change*, the academic Paris of the 1930's was helpless.

Germany became the only country in Europe where thinking continued on the plane of Modernist analysis. Thomas Mann declared that he saw there a movement representing the same "forces of darkness" that had animated the "expressionists" and other Modernist experimentors. (Mann, the symbolist, overlooked the tremendous material difference between an image in verse or on canvas and a similar image in actual life, between a Picasso cubist portrait of a woman and a female torso chopped to bits by a "cubist" murderer. Thus once more it was shown that he who confuses art and action stands on the verge of crime—or of false criticism.)

In Germany, Bohemian spiritual negation had been armed with a scientific method based upon the techniques of subjugation employed in all modern class States. With increasing skill, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

effects of violence were tried out in every sphere of life. Modernism in art was suppressed, in order to seal the secret of the tyrant's spirit. The extermination of Reds and Social-Democrats was accomplished through the primitive medium of the Reichstag fire; the breaking of the Jews with routine hoodlumism; the torture of Protestant Bishops with an approach specially prepared; the extinction of the Catholics with strokes of a different sort. New provocations were invented, with the prolixity of the Paris Schools of Post-War, in order to gauge the resilience of the victim. He was dosed with drugs of peace, allowing the analyst to chart his determination and will to victory. Greed was weighed against courage and love of tradition—so that friends might be purchased among the patriots of all countries. Finally, when the open fight began, the German "extremists" pretended by months of sea battle to have agreed to fight with the enemy's weapons, all the time preparing to annihilate him with surprises.

Thus German leadership, with its ferocious enclosed energy, with an assurance and shamelessness that only philosophy can produce, seized control of the spirit of modern industrial culture relinquished by the Paris studios. The scuttling of middle-class conservative values became a physical fact.

And the "defenders of culture"? At the stroke of the Hitler gong, the last tremors in art, literature, science, politics, cease as if at a signal. For six years, not a single new idea makes itself heard. Impregnated by the thrust from the center of Europe, minds formerly independent slink into institutions for the disgraced. Here sickly "new worlds" are born—Stalinist Nationalist Utopias, Catholic "Cities of God," Social Credit Luna Parks—and quickly disowned. No imagination dares to grapple with the present and the future. No one develops a fresh nucleus of resistance. The old faces reappear, the old banners are brought up from the cellar, and the blessings of the Church, the Family, and the Classics are heaped against the crumbling Maginot Line of the status quo.

So that, at last, when the crisis is ripe, a fast-moving explosive force finds nothing in its path but a pile of decomposed scrapings.

The Academy had failed to halt modern art, and fascism was not to be stopped by clichés.

In the Fascist political and military adventures, Modernist mysticism, dreaming of an absolute power to re-arrange life

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

according to any pattern of its choice, submits itself to trial. Against this experiment is opposed, not conservatism, but the slowly growing creative consciousness of the people of the world —the Modernism of the carriers of human values against the Modernism of individual will to power.

No one can predict which city or nation will be the center of this new phase. For it is not by its own genius alone that a capital of culture arises. Currents flowing throughout the world lifted Paris above the countryside that surrounds it, and kept it suspended like a magic island. And its decline, too, was the result, not of some inner weakness—not of "sensuality" or "softness," as its former friends and the present enemies of the people declare—but of a general ebb. For a decade, the whole of civilization has been sinking down, lowering Paris steadily towards the soil of France. Until its restoration as the capital of a nation was completed by the tanks of the Germans.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cross-Country: The Ozarks

To the Hills (For Alan Mather)

IT'S SAFE HERE in the Ozarks, and calm, and things don't change very much. If the trains (two a day) and the bus (one a day) and the trucks and automobiles stopped running and the power were shut off, it wouldn't make a great deal of difference. Most of us use coal oil lamps, anyway, and Grammaw's old candle moulds are up in the attic. We grow our own food, except for a few things like coffee and sugar, and we chop our own wood. We listen to the radio, but that's more for the weather report than for the war news.

Self-sufficiency, I suppose you call it. We don't ship much out (livestock and fence posts) and we don't ship much in.

There are 1800 farm families in the county. 1200 of them have a cash income of less than $400 a year. 400 families subsist on the beans, prunes, raisins, flour, lard, corn grits, and apples provided by the relief agency. The county director of the WPA, apparently suspecting a fifth column maneuver, refused to tell me how many people are on the WPA rolls, but local inhabitants estimate the figure as close to 700.

If we're lucky, we wrest a subsistence from the hill-side plots, where the drought is sure to get you, or from the creek bottoms, where high water is likely to wash away your crop. Only a fifth of the land of the county is under cultivation, and that includes pasture land. The rest is too steep or too poor to be worth cultivating.

A tenth of the land in this county has been forfeited for delinquent taxes. You can buy it from the State Land Office for $1.25 an acre. It's grand scenery: not mountains, just steep hills and narrow valleys, with lots of creeks and little rivers.

If we have a farm, we and the womenfolks and the young uns work it. If we haven't a farm, we try to hire out to somebody else or to get on relief. If we're young and ambitious we take out for California or join the Navy. If we're young and not so ambitious, we join the CCC.

It's a man's country. A man is boss in his own family. When we go to town on Saturdays, the women and kids walk behind us, the old woman carrying the baby. When we have company, we eat at the first table, with the women waiting on us and shooing the flies away. When there's any talking to be done, we do it.

There is little mingling of the sexes, except when a young man is courting. Young men are scarce around here, and they usually seek protection in numbers. The boys make intermittent efforts to lay the girls. It's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

easy to tell a virgin. According to the local wits, when you push a girl over and she just lays there, it means she's willing. If she gets up again, she ain't.

Most of the time, we work all day, eat supper, and then to bed.

However, there's plenty to do, if you want entertainment.

On cool fall evenings you can go fox hunting. You get up on top of a hill with a jug of whiskey and listen to the hounds chasing the fox over the hills. Every man knows his own hound's voice, and it's easy to follow the chase that way. Then you take another drink and listen to the next tall story.

You can go hunting or fishing. There's deer and wild turkey and quail and squirrel in the woods, and bass and cat-fish and buffalo and perch in the creeks.

You can get up a square dance, and I personally don't know of any finer fun. Almost everyone can play a fiddle or pick a gittar, and with somebody to call the figures, you're all set. On Saturday nights you can go to town and drink beer and round-dance in the honkey-tonk to the blaring music of a nickelodeon.

There's almost always a revival somewhere in the neighborhood for those inclined to religion. In the summer we build brush arbors and have revivals lasting a couple of weeks. We sing the old hymns, and the preacher thunders against whiskey-drinking and card-playing and dancing, and after things get warmed up the women begin to scream and roll on the ground.

Here lately a lot of women evangelists have been going through the hills holding revivals. They wear shiny silk cloaks and play on trombones and accordions and sing in rasping, husky voices and bellow out sermons much in the manner of barkers at a county fair.

Going to town on Saturdays is the big thing. The whole family piles into the Ford or into chairs set in the wagon bed. The men meet their friends and talk crops and politics. The women drag the children about through the stores, pricing calico and exchanging gossip with their friends. If the town is big enough, there will be a Wild West movie that night, but it usually costs too much. In our little county seat we have a movie once a week in the Legion Hut. Last week we saw "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

On Sundays we go visiting or have company. The whole family makes the visit, and it lasts all day. The young uns play and fight together, the womenfolk help with the cooking and exchange news, and the menfolk sit on the porch and swap yarns.

Everybody in the county knows everybody else, and usually everybody is related to everybody else, in a complicated scheme of second-cousin-three-times-removed that the womenfolk have to keep track of. Grampaw's exploits in the Civil War are still a matter of conversation, but Cousin Logunza's adventures over in France during the World War don't make much impression. That was too far away, whereas you can still see the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hole in the front door that the Yankee bullet made when it missed Grampaw by a frog's whisker.

There are no Negroes in the county, and we won't allow one to stay overnight here. That applies to practically the whole Ozark country.

Politics means county politics and is based wholly on personalities. You are born and raised a Democrat (that is taken for granted) and you vote for Marvin Meadows for shurf because you've known him all your life and he's a pretty good sort of a fellow, whereas his opponent comes from the other side of the county and is as crooked as a barrel of snakes. Political quarrels are carried on with intense bitterness, and most of the enmities in the county arise from political differences.

You vote, that is, if you can afford to pay a dollar for poll tax. If you're smart, you buy as many poll tax receipts as you can afford. It's a pretty good investment. Only 18.5 percent of the potential voters in Arkansas vote, but the Arkansas Gazette says the poll tax is a good thing because registration is too expensive and besides even where they have registration elections are crooked and all the people don't vote. Anyway, we all know that the poll tax keeps the Negroes down in the southern part of the State from voting. How would you like to have a Negro for Governor? How would you like to have the Negroes going around pushing the white folks off the sidewalk?

Doctors are few and far between. There is a hospital over in the next county where you can take your folks to die, if you can afford it. Patent medicines of proven efficacy on man and beast are the mainstay of the countryside, however. Doctors don't dare give hypodermic injections out in the hills, for then they will be held accountable if the patient dies. The standard prescription for almost everything is two CC (cathartic compound) pills every hour till about a dozen have been taken. One such pill would have a disastrous effect on the ordinary person, but that staggering dose seems to be required by the hill people. Quinine is prescribed in gigantic quantities.

Most people can read and write. Newspapers and mail order catalogs provide reading material. Books are practically unknown. I think I should be quite safe in saying that three-fourths of the inhabitants of the county have not read a book through since they left school. Where would they get a book, in the first place? There is no bookstore within 150 miles of here. The county seat has a public library in a corner of the Legion Hut, but it is never open, and its contents are said to consist of a few volumes of Dickens. Fayetteville, the site of the State University, the Athens of Arkansas, has no bookstore, beyond the one dealing in textbooks. The people who are known as great readers consume detective and cowboy magazines, and the women read true confession stories.

This used to be a great country for moonshiners, and there are said to be a number of stills yet in operation in the hills. The two liquor stores in the county seat do a thriving business. Boys begin to chew or smoke while they are still children, and many of the older women use snuff.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The thing that makes life in the Ozarks a never-ending delight, aside from the beauty of the hills themselves, is the people. They have all the vices and most of the virtues that go to make life comfortable and pleasant.

They love to gossip about their neighbors, and a good story on someone is told with relish for years. People are not just names and faces here. If you ask who a person is, you are obligingly furnished with his complete family history, beginning with his great-grandfather's arrival here from Tennessee in 1832, the part his family played in the Civil War, all the memorable doings of his kinfolks up to the present time, a full account of his life history, biographies and characterisations of his wife and children, and a penetrating analysis of his characteristics and peculiarities.

If you are an outsider, they want to know all about you, and somehow that curiosity is rather flattering. They want to fit you into the community life.

They have a sense of humor compounded of ludicrous under-statement and the wildest exaggeration. Jokes are very broad, but never in any circumstances is a suggestive word spoken in front of a woman. Women who tell dirty jokes are whores, and that is that. Marital infidelity is very rare on the part of the women. When a woman marries, she lays aside powder and paint and devotes herself wholeheartedly to the full-time job of being a good wife and mother. Divorces are extremely rare, and are resorted to, after prolonged family conferences, only when a couple can no longer live together without grave danger to life and limb.

There is a strong spirit of neighborliness among the people here. If anyone is sick, neighbors volunteer to help with the nursing, or to look after the children, or to cook for the family, or to help with the spring plowing. You speak to everyone you meet in the street, whether you know him or not. You can be certain that he knows who you are. Of course, this applies only to men. You do not speak to women, unless you know them, and then only to exchange "howdy's" with them.

Our little town does not differ greatly from what it was in 1840. It was smaller then, and there were no electric lights or automobiles, but the feeling of the place, to judge from the old inhabitants' accounts of the days of their grandfathers, must have been pretty much the same. And I dare say that in 2040 it will not be greatly different from what it is now. The great-grandchildren of my present friends will be here, talking about their neighbors and discussing crops and politics in the same leisurely way. They may be cooperative farmers working on State farms, but their language and their jokes will be essentially the same.

JOHN T. APPLEBY

Yellville, Ark.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Cultural Front

James T. Farrell

Mortimer J. Adler: A Provincial Torquemada

EVERYTIME I SEE the name of Mortimer J. Adler, I am reminded of a remark that Samuel Johnson made about an eighteenth century poet: "He was dull in a new way, and that made many think him *great.*" As a contemporary obscurantist and obfuscator, Mortimer J. Adler bows to no one—not even to Waldo Frank. He writes with a pomposity that some people mistake for profundity: his scholarship is superficial: and although he is fond of using the word logic, his reasoning is weak, even shabby. With the possible exception of Bishop Manning, Adler is the leading American fellow traveller of the Roman Catholic Church. The role he now plays suggests a parallel with John Strachey. In the days when John Strachey was fellow travelling, he is reported to have been asked why he did not join the Communist Party. His answer was that he was not good enough to be a Communist. Why doesn't Adler undergo baptism? He is not good enough to be a Catholic. He reminds me of a man who stands by a swimming pool, watching his friends enjoy themselves in the water. They see that he is anxious to join them, and shout for him to come in because the water is fine. He poises himself to dive, but at the last moment, he recoils. He cannot force himself to make that dive into the unknown which will get him wet. After fits and starts, encouragements and exhortations, he turns away from the pool and goes off urging other people to go swimming because the water is fine.

The success and influence of Mortimer J. Adler indicates clearly that his dullness is new to many people. Obviously, it is something new to such intellects as Robert Maynard Hutchins and Clifton P. Fadiman. But to me, it is pretty stale stuff. Whenever I pick up any writing of Adler's, I am determined to read every word. But I quickly get the point he is driving at, and I realize that this is where I came in. All that Adler has to say is like my mother's milk to me. Long, long ago I was fed it from a better source than Mr. Adler. It was not digestible then, and it is less digestible now when Adler feeds it to me.

One of Mortimer J. Adler's fundamental postulates is the following. A proposition which cannot be demonstrated is more true than a proposition that can be. In other words, basic truths are self-evident and not sub-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sumable to empiric proof. A philosophy of empiricism or scientific method is heresy. Positivism, reaching its worst state of degradation in the pragmatism of John Dewey, is not only heresy: it is a heresy which leads squarely into totalitarianism. Positivistic university teachers in the United States are a bigger menace than Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco. How does Adler defend this position? By begging questions. By removing his postulates from the realm where they can be demonstrated. By name-calling. And what are his self-evident truths? Those which are postulated in the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church.

Several years ago, Adler composed a metaphysics of the movies titled *Art and Prudence.* In that book, he wrote: "In the deepest sense, all contemporary European societies are democratic, whether their government is republican and legislation is representative, as in England, France and the United States, or whether it is totalitarian, and the rule is by a dictator or by a single party, as in Germany, Italy and Russia." Further, he stated: "The importance of the ministry of propaganda in Italy and Germany indicates the democratic aspect of these societies." In a footnote of the same book, he even fell for Stalin's new constitution. Today, Mortimer J. Adler has come forward as a true defender of democracy. He is defending democracy, not only against Hitler, but even more so, against President Conant of Harvard, John Dewey, Teacher's College and sundry others. He is even composing a metaphysics of democracy. Perhaps in his metaphysics of democracy he will write as acutely on the movies as he wrote on democracy in his metaphysics of the movies.

Adler's critique of modern thought and science does not differ in any fundamental sense from such books as Gilson's *The Unity of Philosophical Experience,* Maritain's *True Humanism,* or Father D'Arcy's *The Nature of Belief.*[1] Adler, and his co-thinking Catholic philosophers all sing the same tune. Modern thought is heretical, and *they* possess the true belief. The true belief is self-evident. Because of the influence of heretics in the last several centuries, modern man is unhappy, modern society is in chaos, and modern thought is in a blind alley. Man must believe as they believe. From Adler's premises, you can explain anything *ex post facto:* you can explain the reasons for any phenomena from the fall of the French Empire to women wearing short skirts. However, I observe that these men who have the true belief seem utterly unable to predict. The true belief appears to give them no aid and help in predicting the future. All they seem able to do is to prophesy doom in generalizations which do not even glitter. Their programmatic conceptions are a hodge-podge. For society, they want a new City of God that is not the old City of God, and yet it is like the old City of God and still, it isn't quite the old City of God. For modern philosophy, they want a return to the Absolute. That means putting science in its place, and restoring theology as the queen bee in the intellectual hive. A philosophical ally of this group, Berdyaev states their

[1] I am here considering Gilson's own positive views, and not his excellent scholarly researches on medieval thought.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

philosophical programme in the following sentence: "The existence of philosophy presupposes an appropriate *philosophical* mode of cognition as distinct from a *scientific* one."[2] And Berdyaev, following Max Scheler, considers science as more or less the revolt of the slaves. There is a class struggle of the mind between religion and science, and philosophy is in the tragic position of the centrist. None of these thinkers, Catholics and fellow travellers, have any originality of mind. They run in pat and settled grooves, and they mix up vagueness and sentimentality with appeals for authoritarianism. Their authoritarianism is defended by all the stale arguments for reaction. They use a religious glow and the historic prestige of medieval and classic philosophers as a camouflage for this authoritarianism. But an authoritarian doctrine needs more than arguments borrowed from Aquinas if it is to be implemented. It needs force. That these new medievalists are prepared for force to uphold their superior Reason is made clear in Maritain's *True Humanism*. At the present time, Mortimer J. Adler is merely a provincial Torquemada without an Inquisition.

When these men talk of the past of the Church, they idealize that past. They find sophistries to support the persecution of heretics. They prate about the unity of mediæval society while forgetting that there was disunity as well as unity in that form of society. They are still playing the role of intellectual coroners, and issuing endless death certificates to those poor misguided fellows—the nominalists.

The historian Gibbon wrote: "The Church of Rome defended by violence the empire which she had acquired by fraud." Here is a side of history that fails to interest Adler. But he does have one characteristic in common with many of the early Christians. They wanted their cake and they wanted to eat it too. The Emperor Constantine, for instance, waited until he was on his death bed to be baptized. Adler is still delaying his baptism.

---

[2] *Solitude and Society* by Nicolas Berdyaev, New York, 1938, p. 16.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Film Chronicle

CHAPLIN AGAIN AGAIN AND AGAIN

1. If this singular film were not by Chaplin and with Chaplin, it would be both more satisfying on first view and less integral and comprehensible on reflection. More satisfying because we'd take the laughs without expecting the perfect comic continuity, which is not here, and without disgust at the poor timing. We'd never give a second thought to the calamitous music (Meredith Willson) nor the feeble dialogue. The persistent lapses in style—in the color of the photography, unity of the sets, formality of the acting of the secondary roles—would even be in the usual order of things. And the democratic Message, direct address to the audience and all, would belong only to the political bias of the spectator to judge: he would call it collective security or aid to Britain depending on the date he likes to project himself and the film into; he might wonder a bit at the words "gentleness," "unnatural men," etc.; in any case it would all seem out of place, "out of character" as the critics have agreed to call it. But it's Charlie Chaplin! and what have these remarks to do with him? For instance, what possibly is the meaning of "lapses in style" when applied to Charlie Chaplin? Therefore I have had to turn to the following *genetic* considerations to explain the puzzle; and perhaps to find that this is something different, and something better, than the "grandiose failure" of the worried reviewers.

2. From the earliest 2-reelers, the Chaplin hero was, of course, the square peg in the round hole; but this genus was specified by several considerations: (a) The environment to which the hero could not quite adjust was realistic, not fantastic; (b) it was in principle *approved,* so that the hero had to try to make an adjustment,—this was the pathetic humor of "good intentions" and "try try again"; (c) the comic difficulty of the hero was not common to others, all were not in the same boat,—this was the "isolated and lonely Charlie," the "one black sheep"; (d) yet the courageous little hero was not excluded because he was a freak, but somehow because he had a power and duty *freer* than the reality. This last point is capital; because by it the comedy became absolute, distinct from that kind of comedy which turns on some original disproportion in the hero or situation which is ultimately reconciled, as e.g. in Buster Keaton. By it, too, a strong irony is cast over the attempts of the hero himself (point b) to make an adjustment; so that not only the indifferent in the environment is comically criticized, but the good as the hero sees it is comic in the same way. Along these lines, I think, we can explain the remarkable comic continuity of such long films as *The Kid, The Gold*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rush, and *Modern Times;* for the set-up in them is such that there is no distinction in kind between the slapstick of jarring with mechanical nature and the humor of the jarring characters and desires. Put otherwise: the audience need not change its attitude from sequence to sequence. It is within this master conception that the development among the films, from 1915 to 1935, takes place: it consists of the enlargement of the comic environment from, say, the Murphy-bed of *One A. M.* to the assembly-line of *Modern Times;* and with this, naturally, a corresponding intellectualizing and refining of the thoughts and desires of the Little Man (as Chaplin calls him). Now there is no reason why this development could not have proceeded also into the political environment, even the environment of international politics; and finally, I suppose, into the divine order of the worlds so we would have had the Comic Angel in the celestial choir. (Let us hope we are to have him still!)

3. This is not the development in *The Great Dictator.* Rather we suddenly find that the environment is in principle *not approved;* the poet finds, suddenly, that it is wicked to try to make an adjustment to the Nazi order. Then note: (a) A completely different kind of comedy appears, comic Invective, direct satire, which turns not on the relation between an approved situation and an amiable individual, but on the immediate assault, in a multitude of debasing parodies, on the situation itself, as against a possible approved situation. We here see the introduction of the remarkable contraries "Unnatural" and "Natural." (b) But in the second place, contrasted with the Unnatural object of the Invective, we find the Natural amiable situation becoming a non-comic object of desire, for which we try try again; therefore, *all irony is withdrawn from these efforts* —the life in the Ghetto—and the relevant comedy, far from absolute, turns on the fact that these people have human frailties, mainly inveterate hopefulness and pacifism, which can be altered, and in the resolution of the film are altered. Then, instead of a single comic conception, continuous from slapstick to the most probing comedy of life, we have at least the following 3 kinds of comedy: (a) Invective against the unnatural Nazi regime; (b) Sentimental handling of the natural life in the Ghetto; (c) Slapstick in the 2 environments: 1. Amongst themselves the unnatural men are natural men, and we can return to the older unitary conception, as in the slapstick relation of Herring and Hynkel, or preeminently in the relation of Hynkel and Napoloni, where Hynkel is the Little Man!—a slapstick which passes over without break into the most tear-moving burlesque, as the Balloon Dance. 2. Slapstick in the Ghetto, for the natural men are only men,—so, Charlie with the derby and the cane, or the puddings with the coins. It is clear in several places that Chaplin toyed with the immensely elaborate idea of having the Barber be transformed from the older role of the hopeless hoper to the new role of resident in an evil order.

An analysis such as this explains well enough the construction of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

film in parallel plot-strands, related indirectly thru thoughts and causes rather than directly thru will and action.

4. (a) The invective against Hynkel is to my taste all-powerful: disgust expressed by the basest tricks of low vaudeville, gibberish, belching, dirty words, and radio static. You will not find the like outside of Juvenal. It is so successful that even many of the slapstick errors do not fail to create the impression "Good! hit 'im again!" On the other hand, the personal Hynkel is not the political Hitler, a point to which I must return. (b) The sentimental comedy is catastrophic. Concerning Maurice Moscovich and Paulette Goddard I don't know what to say, but the pain in the neck is with me as I write. But the coup de grace is the sunlit agriculture of Osterlich-Tel Aviv-Pasadena. Nevertheless! paradoxically I shall almost argue that it is just these horrors which lend to a kind of triumph, the major triumph, of the film as a whole. (c) The slapstick and burlesque, it cannot be denied, badly weaken the force of the invective. It's no doubt a kind of invective to show that a dictator is all too human, but slapstick in general involves at least neutrality toward the victim, and Chaplin slapstick almost always turns out with the victim made amiable; it is a kind of pat of approval. In itself, however, the Hynkel-Napaloni business is a first-rate example of the ordinary; and the burlesque character-exploration of the soulful Hynkel is often great. I must speak of the Balloon-Dance again: this is almost the only dance in the movies so far (the others are in Chaplin's other films); he fills the screen and the whole screen dances, so the processions of Eisenstein dance; and the strains of Lohengrin are pat as can be.

5. Hynkel is not Hitler. It is clear from the foregoing that this Hitler can be only the natural and unnatural man to whom Chaplin's old little man can entertain personal feelings. There is absolutely no political comedy in the film. Propaganda, in the person of Herr Garbitsch, is treated with solemnity. Where, for instance, is the comedy of the atrocities that would exhaust the Phooey's patience and be the prelude to invasion? English mustard lays the dictators low, but where is the comedy of non-intervention, etc., etc.? Certainly the real Hitler and his real world are, in their dry way, funnier than Chaplin's Adenoid Hynkel. But if Chaplin had in fact engaged in a more objective satire, it seems to me that the most precious effect of the entire film would have been lost. This brings me to my last point.

6. Except for a few documentaries, like Joris Ivens' *Spanish Earth*, *The Great Dictator* strikes me—obviously I cannot speak for any one else on this point—as the only earnest propaganda film. How is this amazing effect achieved? Most, perhaps, by the ring of autobiography never absent from Chaplin's art, the ring which made the song at the end of *Modern Times* seem the pathetic return of the great silent mime to the singing variety performer. In this film, for instance, what is the significance of the curious amnesia after the memory of *Shoulder Arms?* It is achieved, again, by the very restriction of the invective to what the Chaplin we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

really know and are sure of can express by the means or the genre of means, and the kind of feelings, that belong to *him*. Again, by the unashamed representation, once he has withdrawn the irony from them, of the *very same sentimental ideals* which are tearful *and* funny in *The Vagabond, The Kid, Modern Times*. To say this rather wickedly, many a spectator might think that the ecstatic last close-ups of Miss Goddard aren't so pretty as all that, but there is not the least doubt that Charlie thinks she is just beautiful. So, to return to the celebrated Message-speech at the end of the film: it does not seem to me, as it did to most others, that he here steps "out of character"; on the contrary, this speech is just the character of the Jewish Barber (who was at no moment made unrestrainedly funny). The speech is too long, it is not even well spoken thruout; but when he says, "We think too much and feel too little" and "Now we must fight!"—we know that the context for the truth or falsity of these propositions has been fairly given to us by the speaker; if this isn't meant from the heart, we have been deceived for 25 years.

A SILK PURSE, A SOW'S EAR

With the appearance of the 3rd, and perhaps last, number of the *Films* of Mssrs. Kirstein and Leyda, it is not amiss to make some comment. But what I have to say, I fear, comes down only to this: It doesn't seem possible to have a serious magazine of the films when there are no films. Could one fill a contemporary literary magazine if the whole of literature were the *Saturday Evening Post* and, once a month, *Harpers?*

On the credit side, there obviously should be a serious film periodical and *Films* is serious (60c a copy). In the absence of cinema in the theatres, it has printed some interesting scenarios, e.g. Gorki's notes for *The Lower Depths* or James Agee's *Man's Fate*. In the absence of films, too, it has devoted itself mainly to sociology: why are there no films? and, what is the social effect of what there is?

But the attempt to sociologize about trivial nonsense must inevitably give rise to the following thoughts: Where no novelty or problem is given by the objects, any original or creative ideas must come from the critic (as Kenneth Burke, e.g., could write amusingly about Nelson Eddy); then, Why bring in *these* objects at all? What, for instance, are we to say of 14 long pages (in No. 1) about Films at the Fair? Why discuss censorship (like Mr. Falk) if we are to emerge with the guiding principle of "Lincolnism," namely "To do justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with Thy God"? It is not, of course, that social ethics are insignificant, but why debase them in the context of bad movies? to do so is to dabble in just the hogwash of Adler's *Art and Prudence*. The fact is that political discussions of art have an effect only on persons vitally interested in art, and no such person is interested in these little items. But the pièce de résistance is to find an issue (No. 3) devoted to Pan-America! If to speak

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seriously about contemporary cinema is to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, what shall we say when we restrict contemporary cinema to the 21 Republics?!

But if we turn to the other possibility for a magazine, theoretical aesthetics, the set-up is even worse. For the most part we must expect that concrete works will pose the critical problems, and where are the works? Painstaking general analysis demands the inspiration of achievement and progress, to seem worth the trouble; but now, in place, e.g., of the laborious and praiseworthy essays of Jean Prévost on *La Face Humaine à l'Ecran* (*Close-Up*, 1927-8) or of Pudovkin on Acting, we have the thin generalizations of Alberto Cavalcanti that the correct (sic!) use of sound is "non-sync." Concerning the outrageous attempts (Kurt London) to praise the Film Music of the Quarter, I hold my peace. But consider such absolutely basic aesthetic questions as are invariably raised by a change of the medium: When Sound came in, or when the abortive Grandeur Screen was projected, there was a flood of excited controversy among the best minds in the art, for either imagination saw a new path or productive genius saw threatened the old way not explored to the end. Now color is here, the full-length animated is here, and where are the critics? Their reply is, Who cares?

Turn over a file of *Close-Up* or *Experimental Cinema* of the end of the 20's or a year or two of the 30's: they are talking about, *currently reviewing*—not always wisely, *Jeanne D'Arc, Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg, The Wedding March, Ten Days* and *Old and New, Storm Over Asia, Jeanne Ney,* and *Sunrise;* the names that come up are Stroheim, Pabst, Sidzuki, Arnheim, Herbert Read, Man Ray, Potamkin, etc., etc. Now some idiots have had the consummate brass to say, to say as a *dogma,* that the decadent 20's, the international and apocalyptic 20's, were sterile. It was the decade of *La Creation du Monde* and *The Rhapsody in Blue,* or the *Symphonie des Psaumes, The Castle,* Cocteau and *The Waste Land.* In comparison I can only paraphrase Adenoid Hynkel, "The 30's shtunk!" And the 40's? I am speaking only of the arts, and the vanguard of the arts. Of more general social phenomena—nor is the cause and effect far to seek —there is a rather different story to tell.

Let me quote the pathetic accents of old Arnheim—he is writing in 1935 (*Cinema Quarterly*, Summer 1935)—as he describes the role of a cinema critic: "With others like himself he argues about films which, for 10 years or more, no one has been able to see, and about which, therefore, anything or nothing may be said; he discusses montage as medieval scholars discussed the existence of God, and believes that all these things could exist today. In the evening he sits, reverently attentive, in the cinema, playing the critical friend of art, as tho we were still living in the days of Griffith, Stroheim, Murnau, and Eisenstein. He thinks he is seeing bad films, instead of realizing that what he sees is no longer a film at all."

PAUL GOODMAN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Modern Documents

THE TRAIN

Editors' Note: The narrator of the following story is a rank-and-file German trade unionist who worked underground in Germany until 1937. When the war broke out, he was a refugee in France. Imprisoned, like all refugees from Germany, in a French concentration camp, he remained there until the German break-through last May. He and his fellow prisoners were then put on a train to be taken farther South. We print below, in his own words, the story of what happened after that.

THE MOMENT we boarded the train, it started moving. Without a stop and so fast it made us dizzy, the train sped first to *Lyons* and from there straight to *Marseilles*. The doors were closed, but we saw through the openings under the top how singularly beautiful the landscape was, and that it grew ever more marvelous the farther South we went.

In *Marseilles* we drew up to the gangplank of a big steamer. Another train-load of German exiles had arrived from *Dijon* a little earlier. We learned that all of us were to sail for *Algiers* on the boat in the harbor. It was pleasant to think that the deep sea would be between us and the Germans, but after a while we learned that the trip had been cancelled. Where would we go? Nobody knew.

Before we left *Marseilles* our train was shunted from track to track around the city's factory district. Most of the workers who live there are Italian immigrants. When they noticed us, they came running from all directions and then lined the streets alongside the railroad. Wild with enthusiasm they cheered us loudly and waved their hands and kerchiefs. They thought we were soldiers who were going to fight Mussolini.

The next morning found us at the station of a bathing resort in the Provence. After many hours of waiting we were finally driven to a small place which was only a few miles away. We got off in front of a huge building which had once been a brick factory. Now it became our home. Long rows of wooden shelves filled with old bricks were everywhere piled on the floor. Between the rows were dark passage-ways. Here we slept on straw. With each step we made we whirled up a cloud of dust.

As one transport of prisoners arrived after the other and the number of residents rose to 3,000, it became torture to live in that place. There was only one toilet and the water-supply was near the toilet. To get to these places we had to stand in line.

"You know," said one of our learned friends, "this region of Europe has been known for its healthy climate since Roman days." We grinned. "Its beautiful sunshine and balmy air and the fresh wind that blows from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the mountain and sea, were sung by many an ancient and modern bard." We grinned.

During our stay in that filthy hole, the old brick factory, there were two groups that busied themselves with bringing out news and interpreting it: the "Nazis" and the "Jews." Two or three real Nazis had drawn others into their orbit—people who had never been able to make up their minds as to where they stood politically. This gang was up in the early morning and worked systematically to break the morale of the prisoners. From the start they declared the situation to be hopeless. The "Jews" turned up around ten a.m. with mostly very favorable news. They had been talking to us about the success of the French at Rheims and Verdun.

Then the commander announced, through the chef du camp that the Germans had reached Lyon.

Excitement mounted sky-high. Committees were appointed who went to see the commander and demanded that the prisoners be at once removed from the danger zone. Demonstrations were staged in the yards and large groups of men appeared before the officers luggage in hand asking that they be released. The officers made promises, fixed dates of departure, stalled for time. The tension grew; it became almost unbearable: We knew what our fate would be if we fell into the Nazi clutches. "Is this what we lived for?" cried out an old trade union leader who had for a quarter of a century served the German labor movement. "But they will not catch *me* . . . not *alive*."

When they read in a paper one morning that fighting was going on south of *Lyon*, the prisoners threatened to use force. The officers got jittery and reinforced the guard. Only after the guards had deserted the place in scores, did they consider it necessary to make serious preparations for our exodus. They asked who intended to remain in the camp and to return to Germany. 15% of the prisoners answered to this question. To our amazement their number comprised a good many Jews. "For nine months the administration has tried in vain to sift the Nazis from the German refugees," said the camp commander when he was given the figures, "and we accomplished it in ten minutes."

An official notice was put up saying that we would leave on the following day by train. Next day, we were again huddled into freight cars.

At *Arles* we snatched a paper from a newsboy. The armistice was signed with Germany; hostilities would continue however, until a similar agreement with Italy became effective. So we still had the monsters at our heels.

Montpelier . . . Béziers . . . Cette . . . Narbonne . . . Toulouse.

Tarbes. The camp where the refugees from Spain had been interned was but a short distance away. It seemed likely that we'd be dumped there, but the train instead moved on toward *Pau* and *Bayonne*. Our spirits rose. So they had, after all, decided to ship us to another continent. Where would we go? To Morocco? To Canada or Alaska? Or to Martinique?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the sight of the sea we felt like shouting "Hurrah." Slowly the train slid through the harbor district to a freight station where it was switched to a side track. "They are doing this," said one of our friends, a former railroad worker, "to get us as closely as possible to the waterfront." Several big steamers lay at anchor. Which one was "ours"?

We hadn't yet got off the train when our spokesmen were called to a conference. We thought they would be going there to receive special instructions as to how to get us on board ship in an organized fashion. To our astonishment we saw them coming back in a few minutes. Unable to restrain himself, one of them cried out from afar: "It's half past four; at seven the German troops are expected to arrive here; the railroad people are trying to get another locomotive and a machinist who could drive us back to where we came from; we have the start; now all depends on whether we shall be able to use that to our advantage."

He must have gone mad. All of them must have gone mad. Or had *we* suddenly become deranged? Even the bravest of us must, at that moment, have felt a choking pain in his throat. "But the paper," one man stammered, "the paper said that the Germans halted at La Rochelle."

"Whence you can get here in no time by car," replied another one dryly.

We all knew that nothing could save us if we were unable to leave *Bayonne* at once.

A locomotive arrived and fortunately they also found a machinist who declared himself willing to drive us back. The train was to leave in half an hour. According to the latest news, the Germans were advancing towards *Pau.* For a couple of miles our train was to travel in the same direction they came from. This meant that we had to be ready, at any time, to jump.

Upon hearing this, two Jews seized their prayer books and betook themselves to the synagogue. Some of us went into the harbor in the vague hope of getting on a boat. The decks of the big steamers looked deserted. No smoke came out of their funnels. Others ran up to the highway because they thought one of the refugees who passed by in their cars might give them a lift. The rest sat down to sort their luggage and to tear up letters and documents. The commander called up the Spanish authorities at *Irun,* to find out whether they would permit us to cross the border. The answer was, of course, "NO."

The train started. We sat on what was left of our earthly possessions. None of us was able to say very much. The men in the rear of the train tried to thrust themselves into the front cars, fearing that the first section of the train might break loose and leave them on the tracks. Their appearance caused much anger and dispute. How could one hope to get quickly out of a car which was so terribly overcrowded? Three elderly Viennese, each one carrying two heavy suitcases covered with hotel stickers, came in where we sat. "If you bring your junk here, we'll open the other door and fling it into the river," said two poor fellows indignantly. They had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

parted with everything but a small bundle which one held under his arms and the other had tied to his back.

The train came to a sharp stop. We asked our spokesman to find out what was the matter. The Germans, he reported, had reached *Dax* ahead of us. French flyers had sighted their armed cars on the road. So we now had to be ready to jump at any minute. Out into the night flew wash basins, boots, pants, underclothes and torn up letters. One fellow was worried because he had no tie. How could one meet strangers in unknown places without wearing a tie? He even offered his typewriter in exchange for one. Nobody wanted to have it.

In spite of the pouring rain, the door to the river was opened. The train was just moving along the edge of a canyon at the bottom of which the water was rustling. No one could hope to escape through that door—which didn't prevent one man from taking off all his clothes, rolling them up in an oil-skin coat which he put around his neck, and standing there in his underthings like one who expected to swim across the river. Many kept on talking about how bad it was that they never learned to swim in their youths. Suddenly the reflection of lights appeared on the high road and we heard the blowing of horns. Believing that "*they*" were coming, many of us immediately jumped from the train. The only one who left from our car was a Polish Jew. In the gathering twilight, we saw him walking across a grain field toward a little wood.

Hour after hour passed on. There we were sitting on that train—veterans of the German Revolution; young chaps who had fought in Spain against Franco; people who had never taken any interest in politics, but been cruelly persecuted merely on account of their Jewish origin; people whose thoughts centered around the big question of the liberation of mankind; and people who thought only of how to find a nook for themselves in some remote corner of the world. There we sat, hoping.

A message was brought in from the commander. He had been in touch with *Pau* and *Tarbes*. No German troops were there. Telephone connections with *Dax* seemed to be disrupted, but he thought it was safe to assume that the Germans would not advance in this darkness and rain. There was nothing to be concerned about now; we should calm down; the train would soon leave for *Pau*. It was another spoonful of the soothing syrup that he liked to administer to us. "These French officers can very well afford to talk to us about being calm and unconcerned," one of us said. "They are not in danger of getting their heads chopped off by the Hitlerites."

At daybreak the train left and reached *Pau* before we were up. But when somebody yelled terror-stricken, "They are coming," we quickly got to our feet again. However, it had been a false alarm. *They* were *not* coming.

Back in *Tarbes* we heard about the signing of the armistice with Mussolini. Overjoyed by the news, all of us leaped off the train. The whole station was jammed with our people who talked and gesticulated gayly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For the time being there was peace, and we were safe. A glance at the map showed how narrow an escape it had been. But where would we go? Nobody knew.

The train went on. Back in *Toulouse.* "We are German exiles," we said to people we met in the street. "Men without a country." Their answer was: "And we had one that betrayed us, which is worse than having none." They were kind and helped us get a warm meal. Later we talked to a group of laborers who worked on the tracks. "We don't care which side won," they said reluctantly, "for this is not our war." They were very serious and pensive. We also spoke to a group of demobilized soldiers, sitting on a train homebound. The country was in a bad state, they agreed. But what could *they* do about it? "Russia will lick the Germans one day," said a young fellow naively. He was obviously glad to be relieved of the duty to do anything about it himself.

Back in *Narbonne . . . Béziers:* Trainloads of soldiers pulled in and out of the station. At each stop the officers did a lot of telephoning to find out where we could go. Nobody knew.

Somewhere we met a train with Czech troops. The men looked unwashed and tired. They said they had been in the rear of the French and forced to retreat with them. Now they hoped to be able to get to England. They were defeated twice, once at home and now again in France without fighting a single battle.

At each prolonged stay large and small crowds of us went off to take a walk or to buy themselves something to eat. Each time some of them had to be pulled in by their arms and legs because they were late and the train had started moving. Each time some of them missed the train and were left behind. Among these was a queer old man who had cut off half of his trousers' legs, when it grew hot and removed his waistcoat and jacket. In this odd costume he stood leaning against a pillar, looking after the departing train with an air of despair.

Glancing across the tracks we noticed at one place large wooden tubs of the kind people use for watering horses. A group of us immediately made for those tubs, to give themselves a thorough scrubbing. While they were there, another train came in and shut them off from us. Warned by our loud shouting, they came running back and crawled under the cars of the other train to get on to ours. One of them came running stark naked and reached the last car just in time to catch on to it.

The train went on. Where would we go. Nobody knew. In the distance the blue waters of the Mediterranean were glittering in the sun. One guard after the other had during our journey asked and received permission to go away and all failed to return. For two more days our train went from place to place until the officers, too, tired of the vain effort to find a refuge for us, walked away. Finally the railroad officials came and told us to get off. Where would we go? Nobody knew!

I stood with my white-haired friend on the shore of the blue sea. "There is no place for us in Europe," he said. "And America?" he added, "America was not discovered for people like you and me."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books

THE REVOLUTIONARY PERSONALITY

Meyer Schapiro

*TO THE FINLAND STATION** is addressed to the reader as "a study in the writing and acting of history." It begins with Vico's assertion that "the social world is certainly the work of man" and ends with the arrival of Lenin on the scene of the Russian revolution. The real subject is the revolutionary leaders who foresee the future and assume consciously an historical role, as if the future was somehow already written out in the nature of the existing society and was waiting for the actors to come upon the stage to enact their parts. This stage is modern capitalism, with its inherent tendencies and possibilities, and the actors are those heroic personalities who are impelled by their own natures in response to conditions, to devote themselves to the revolutionary task with an energy, a purity of purpose and probing intelligence unparalleled in the conservative leaders of the time. The emergence of such individuals is itself an extraordinary historical fact. And although the whole work is shaped to exhibit an historical process and theories of history, the accounts of the men are its most memorable parts.

In the first chapters we see the line of French historical writers (Michelet, Renan, Taine and Anatole France) which derives from the French revolution its initial impulse toward a historical view of man, but, with the decline of the bourgeoisie, shows an increasing scepticism and finally a nihilistic despair. In the second part, Wilson presents the Utopians who establish ideal communities, but lack the historical insight to see the futility of such plans; then the revolutionary thinkers who have discovered the historical conditions of social change and revolution, but cannot effect a successful revolution. And finally, in the third part, for the first time "the key of a philosophy of history fits an historical lock," and Lenin and Trotsky are able to lead the revolution for which the writings of Marx and Engels have prepared them.

*TO THE FINLAND STATION. By Edmund Wilson. Harcourt Brace. $4.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To this primary interest in men the book owes its most attractive qualities as a piece of writing and as an interpretation of the revolutionary movements. In exploring this new world, Wilson has brought into play his understanding of persons and unfailing sympathy with creative and disinterested minds, which are the finest qualities of his literary criticism. The reader is led to the person and his intimate surroundings as he hears of his theories; and even these are woven into the narrative as if they were emanations and experiences of their author, with a physiognomic as well as logical form. The conditions of intellectual work become as concrete, as unforgettable, as the moments of action; we watch Michelet writing history with all the concentration and passion which are attributed in a later chapter to the leaders of an insurrection. With an admirable conciseness, Wilson evokes the individual through familiar external marks; his reading of well-known photographs and portraits, his re-telling of the life-stories, are simply masterly; the writer's costume, his manner of speech, his imagery, his room, are all appropriated as expressive signs, and fitted into a larger pattern of the personality which emerges in the ideas and actions as well. Every person described is individualized and clear; and each has a characteristic and irreplaceable milieu. The description of Lenin's town and of his family and home is a beautiful and stirring work. I do not know how correct are these characterizations, but they impose themselves by their concreteness, finesse and sympathy, and by the intelligent correlation with the documented actions and words of these men, like the great fictional characters of literature. They are essentially descriptions of what is immediately apparent to the critical and mature observer; the intolerance and pedantry and awkwardness of Marx, the ruthlessness of Lenin, belong to these men as evidently as their noblest qualities and are shown as determined and necessary. Wilson looks always for the propelling experiences and impulses and points to every trait which he thinks affected their ideas and actions, as if the revolutionary movement, and history in general, is not only a product of reason and social conditions, but also of the peculiarities of the men who led it. He proceeds from the conviction that the whole human being is involved in thought and action, that historical effectiveness is not simply a matter of intellectual force or will, but of moral qualities

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too, the activity of the person being rooted finally in deep, obscure impulses of the individual.

And he often succeeds through his brilliant style and gift for characterization in convincing the reader that this is so. His conception of personality is the source of an endless stream of fine aperçus. When he wishes to show that Michelet's history of France was inspired by his own sufferings and identification with the people, we are enchanted and won over by the narrative itself. The characterization of Michelet is in complete harmony with the clearly told story of his life, with the circumstances of the time and the content and tone of his writings.

But in the corresponding interpretation of Marx there is a disparity between the improvised "depth" psychology and the rich substance of Marx's ideas. When he speaks of *Capital* as a projection of Marx's "trauma," when he says that "Marx has found in his personal experience the key to the larger experience of society and identifies himself with that society," Marx being the poet of commodities and *Capital* a work of art in which he expresses by the somber, relentless critique of capitalist exploitation his feeling of guilt for the exploitation of his family and closest friend and declares at the same time his tribulation as a wronged man; when moreover Wilson derives Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities from "his own deficiency of personal feeling, which he projected into the outside world" (although the idea of self-alienation was one of the commonplaces in the writings of Hegel and Feuerbach), we become aware then of the formula of "projection," which in its simplicity and mechanism resembles the Marxistic conception of base and superstructure, the individual's vision of the world being a mirror-like reflection of the pattern of his psychic life. When he interprets Marx in this way, Wilson becomes looser in his language and connects indiscriminately the emotional tone and content of Marx's work, its rhetoric and its scientific results, as if the first were an unfailing clue to the other. The reduction of this concept to absurdity is reached when he ventures to account for Einstein's physical discoveries by his Jewish psychology. Just as the Jew Marx uses the economic plight of the workers as a lever to overthrow the capitalist system, so Einstein observes "the few unemphasized anomalies in the well-operating system of Newton," and occupies himself with these pariah physical facts in order to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

overthrow the dominant Newtonian system. We see at this point how Wilson's preconception of the mechanics of personality in all creative work encourages a purely analogical fancy and leads him to distort the history of physics; for he disregards the fact that already long before Einstein the classical mechanics and the Newtonian system were in a precarious state, and that Einstein was dealing with problems which occupied the generation of physicists before him.

Wilson's taste for characterization of personalities has its weak side in this tendency to improvise psychological explanations of ideas and styles without taking into account their complicated history and the objective conditions of intellectual work. In his conviction that ideas are the man, he is too quick to find resemblances between theory and character, as if the personality was a die of fixed pattern stamping uniformly every human product, or as if all human actions were best understood internally as expressive and style-bound. And for a critic who misses no chance to condemn abstractions, metaphysics and willful intuitiveness, he is surprisingly hospitable to dubious theories of race, of the influence of the environment and of cultural action at a distance, so dear to German historians and critics. If Engels writes a clear prose, has sensibility and humor, it is because there is French Protestant blood in his family (forgetting Heine). If Lenin is solid, efficient and diligent, it is because of the German blood of his mother. If Marx is severe, it is an Old Testament sternness; if he is illogical or brooding, it is because he has absorbed from the environment of Trier "the mists and septentrional lights of German metaphysics and mysticism"; if he emphasizes activity, it is the "primitive German Will," from the same stream as German Imperialism and now the Nazi movement. And if Michelet goes to the historical sources, it is because he comes from a family of printers, like the Alduses of Venice who had a taste for editing old manuscripts. But far from being like a Renaissance historian in this respect, Michelet belongs very much to his age; the period of Michelet's youth was precisely the time of the fresh exploration of historical manuscripts and the huge editions of texts and monuments for the study of French history, like Petitot and Monmerqué's (1819-1829) in a hundred and thirty-one volumes, Guizot's (1824-1835) in thirty-one volumes and Buchon's (1824-1829) in forty-seven.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wilson's reference to a specific Jewish psychology is so constant and so obscure that it should be examined more closely. The Jewish ancestry operates in two ways. In the first place, the Jews as an oppressed people are likely to sympathize with other oppressed groups and to take the leadership in movements for emancipation in various fields. But this familiar truth is then inflated in the manner already described: the consciousness of individual oppression is called on to account for the content of the ideas of Marx, Freud, Proust and Einstein, as well as their striving for intellectual excellence and leadership. In the second place, the tradition of the Bible and especially of the prophets gives to later Jewish thinkers a primary "moral insight and world vision," and it is by this tradition that Wilson accounts for the "moral genius" of Marx and the fervor of Trotsky. "Marx," he says, had "inherited from his rabbinical forebears a tradition of spiritual authority"; his "pride and independence, the conviction of moral superiority," came from ancient Judaism. Yet neither Marx nor Trotsky issued from the ghetto or the synagogue, and both felt a complete estrangement from the Jewish community. When Marx spoke of the Jews, it was in a language which will please only anti-Semites. Such personalities and careers are hardly typical of gifted orthodox Jews. Wilson must therefore assume action at a distance, or suppose that this inherent Jewish moralism was transmitted through the germ-plasm, like the French qualities of Engels' prose style. However, when we ask what is this "moral insight and world vision," we find that Wilson is nowhere more vague. The ideas of a universal morality and of basic human rights that he attributes to Marx are more plausibly derived from the French revolution and German philosophy than from the prophets. Wilson points to Marx's recognition of the self-interest and avarice of capitalists as "psychologically profound"; but this is a commonplace of the nineteenth century, which Marx himself documents with citations from older literature. The most interesting of Marx's moral observations, in his early writings, are overlooked; but these are not especially Jewish or original, for they owe a great deal to the Hegelian concept of alienation.

It should be said that Wilson's portraiture is far better than his theories. He manages to model all these characterizations with an abundance of firm, revealing details, and what we see finally,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the utmost vividness, is not the Marx of the racial and psychological explanations, but the everyday surface Marx, as he probably appeared to his closest friends and family. And he several times reaches that summit of biography which he has described so well in speaking of Trotsky's book on Lenin: "an art of traits carefully picked and quietly placed, a portraiture affectionate and delicate, made sober by the deepest respect, quite outside the vein of Marxist vehemence and recalling in an unmistakable way the picture of Socrates by Plato."

To the Finland Station is also a critique of Marxism. Wilson rejects as "metaphysical" the philosophy of dialectical materialism, the economic theories of value, and the notion of history as a process which assures the victory of socialism; the idea of economic determination of culture he finds to be obscure, and he regards as inconsistent with scientific detachment and causality the introduction of moral judgments in Marx's analysis of capitalism; finally, he believes that Marx had inadequate psychological understanding and therefore overestimated the revolutionary tendencies of the proletariat. But he seems to accept in Marxism what he describes as its underlying motive—the concept of basic human rights, the moral aim of a superior humanity and culture, the criticism of class society as an obstacle to the achievement of this goal, and its solidarity with the proletariat as the present means of advancing the interests of humanity as a whole. And although he admits the failure of Lenin to foresee or to prevent the gruesome outcome of the party dictatorship, he speaks of Lenin's "conception of the present" as having "unquestionably proved itself one of the great imaginative influences of our age—a world-view which gives life a meaning and in which every man is assigned a place."

Wilson's criticism of Marx and Marxism in general lacks the freshness and incisiveness of his account of the men. He is free from idolatry and orthodoxy, but he repeats the current unorthodox arguments without clarifying difficult points or presenting fully enough the positions he wants to refute; and he gives too great importance, I think, to beating the dead dog of formal dialectic and the religious conception of a personified History that he imputes to Marx and Trotsky.

I have the impression that, in interpreting Marx, Wilson has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been influenced too much by the prominence and dogmatism that dialectic acquired as an official philosophy of Stalinist communism. If Marx stood Hegel on his head and gave him a new life, and if modern critics have laid them both out horizontally in their graves, Wilson performs a crude autopsy in order to show that the belief in dialectic was the cause of most of the ills of Marxism, its inconsistencies, its political errors and even the support of the World War by the 2nd International and the acquiescence of the 3rd in Stalin. In Wilson's account of this evil doctrine, the greatest importance is given to its trivial formal side; the larger and more interesting aspects of Marx's philosophy, the affirmation of process, of history, of concreteness, of practice and social experience in his conception of knowledge, are only barely indicated and nowhere distinguished from the positions of German and English thought of the same time. The triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is triumphantly exposed as "simply the old Trinity taken over from Christian theology, as the Christians had taken it over from Plato." Wilson goes on to identify it with "the mythical magical triangle" of the Pythagoreans, which "derived its significance from its correspondence to the male sexual organs," and after a quotation from Marx on idealistic philosophy as a kind of onanism, he concludes: "Certainly the one-in-three, three-in-one of the *Thesis*, the *Antithesis* and the *Synthesis* has had upon Marxists a compelling effect which it would be impossible to justify through reason." (In the same bang-up paragraph he also disposes of the whole of German culture as incapable of drama and social observation and as essentially myth-making—Goethe's "eternal feminine" and Kant's "categorical imperative" are cited as examples of myths.)

Everything in Marx is colored by this Pythagorean-Christian-German triangle; it "lies deep in all his work," "it formed his technique of thought and his literary style"; it determined his inconsistencies and inadequacies as a theoretician. Yet this doctrine and method, which Wilson describes sometimes as an artistic device, sometimes as a false law of nature, but always as "metaphysical" and contrary to reason, can be "extremely effective" and "provide a dramatic formula for the dynamics of certain social changes." This mysterious dualism of the dialectic, whereby it is the ground of great original insights and also of absurd speculations, is never clarified by Wilson.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The fact is that he himself is permeated by the dialectic in the trivial sense in which he presents it. His own work has a dialectical pattern and it would be easy to show, by employing his own reductive method, that he is committed to the doctrine he attacks. The book is divided into three parts,* which illustrate a progressive development of historical consciousness through a series of negations. In the first part we read about historians who have no will to change the world; in the second part, the utopians are inspired by this will, but lack historical understanding; the Marxians synthesize the two; and finally, in the third part, come the Russians who negate the revisionist negation of class struggle by a successful revolution, which also synthesizes the antagonism of Marx and Bakunin. The book abounds in smaller dialectical patterns and at one point, in speaking of Lenin, Wilson even explains the emergence of his ideas and personality by an inherent law of antithesis. "This flaccid provincial life conditioned, by a law of antagonism, a purpose of irresistible intensity." The phrase "expropriating the expropriators," which expresses so vividly an essential thought, is cited as an instance of dialectical formalism. But in calling one chapter: Lenin Identifies Himself with History, and the next one: Trotsky Identifies History with Himself, Wilson creates an even more abstract antithesis which does violence to the portrait of Trotsky and requires for its support a questionable judgment of Trotsky's vanity by Bruce Lockhart. From the viewpoint of historical sequence, the book is artificially constructed in order to exhibit the process described above: the characters of the first section, Michelet, Renan, Taine and Anatole France, have no influence whatever on the events and personalities of the subsequent parts; and the correspondence that Wilson finds between the changes in their conceptions of history and the decline of the French bourgeoisie—it also mirrors Vico's idea that human culture passes through a cycle from the primitive, which is popular and emotional (Michelet), to the civilized and intellectual (Renan, Taine), to the anarchic stage of decay (France)—masks the fact that a more objective historical science continued to flourish after the

*And to confirm Wilson's Pythagorean ancestry, let me add that the book contains thirty chapters, three times TEN, which for the Pythagoreans is the holy triangular number, the TETRACTYS, the sum of one, two, three and four, and the source of all other numbers; and each of the three parts of the book has an even number of chapters, the even numbers being feminine, just as three is masculine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time of Michelet and Renan, and it is in part the findings of this scientific history which enable us to see the shortcomings as well as the strength of Marx's conception of society. These bourgeois historians have been introduced to serve as a foil to the socialist writers, as a thesis to be negated. And even the concluding section ends arbitrarily with the arrival of Lenin, like novels which close with the marriage of the hero. For the appearance of Lenin on the scene marks the completion of an historical cycle only from the viewpoint of one who observes this event as a fulfillment; from another viewpoint, it is the beginning of the dictatorship we see today.

I have no desire to defend dialectical materialism. It includes valuable insights (now common to modern philosophy and science) as well as pretentious constructions, and it would be a mistake to judge it as a monolithic whole. I wish only to point out the one-sidedness and distortions that result from Wilson's animus. It impels him to find the occult dialectic deep in every aspect of Marx's writing, in spite of Marx's criticism of Hegel, and to lay to its baneful influence whatever is contradictory in Marxism. He contrasts the speculative, religious, metaphysical side of Marx with the firmly practical nature of Lenin. But the fact is that dialectic first became the official philosophy of the revolutionary movement under Lenin's leadership. In speaking of Lenin's lack of philosophical interests, Wilson mentions the polemic against Empirio-Criticism to show his essentially practical purpose; he ignores the enthusiastic note-books on Hegel written during the first months of the World War. For the sake of the artistic conception of Lenin as a man completely unified in purpose and character, his acceptance of dialectical materialism is presented as an incidental orthodoxy, which may be disregarded in explaining his errors; whereas in Trotsky it is precisely by this heritage of dialectic that Wilson accounts for his "mysticism" of history and his confused amoralism. And the effects of this fatal germ of dialectic in the Kronstadt affair and in the conversion of the party dictatorship into an instrument of oppression, as foreseen by Lenin's early critics, are revealed in the chapter on Trotsky rather than on Lenin, who was surely as responsible, if the responsibility can be laid to individuals.

After having exposed the ravages of dialectics, Wilson offers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the reader a résumé of what is valid in Marx when purged of this mystical element. What do we find here? The assertion that civilized man strives always for order, beauty and health, that "the current of human endeavor is always running in this direction . . .; each of the great political movements that surges up across social barriers brings about a new and broader merging of the rising aggressive element with the element it assaults and absorbs. The human spirit is always expanding against predatory animal pressure, to make larger and larger units of human beings, until we shall have finally realized once and for all that the human race is itself one and that it must not injure itself."

He may condemn abstract statements about the tendencies of history or the progressive character of conflicts and the ultimate victory of the good, as dialectical mysticism and metaphysics; but we see how incapable he is of really expelling them from his own thought.

Elsewhere he regards metaphysics as the poetry of abstract imaginations, but his judgment of this poetry lacks the curiosity and feeling for the imaginative which distinguish his literary criticism. On the other hand, in attacking metaphysics as illogical, his own arguments are rather vague; it is enough for him to say that something is metaphysical in order to dispose of it as false or meaningless. Yet, remarkably enough, he argues that the values of socialism must be presented emotionally and imaginatively, since they can never be proved. But when a writer makes value judgments in economics or speaks of broad tendencies in history which are the ground of his proposed ends, or affirms in metaphors his faith in the victory of his ideals, Wilson criticizes him as a theologian or a mystic. He himself will say: "Fate delivered Bakunin into his [Marx's] hands." He assumes, however, that when Marx and Trotsky speak of History as a judge they are reifying the nonexistent future and betraying their ideal of a scientific knowledge of man. He wants us to read in a literal sense the images of writers whom he has already held up to us as poetic minds; and he will not examine the sense of such expressions in the light of the reasonableness of their programs and their more concrete statements about the future.

This criticism of expressions of faith in the future is puzzling when read beside Wilson's frequent characterizations of Marx and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trotsky as moral and prophetic natures. He is anxious to find a moral basis for socialism and for this reason gives so much importance to Marx as a moralist. As we have seen already, he looks on Marx as a moral genius and with doubtful science derives his moral insight and "world vision" from his Jewish ancestry. He believes that in bringing moral concepts into economics, Marx performed a great service, at least he did something of value to his time. But in another place he regards it as a basic inconsistency that Marx criticizes capitalism for the misery it produces and yet speaks of this system as historically necessary; he thinks it is wrong to mix science and moral observations. In an early writing, Marx had anticipated Wilson's objection; speaking of Mandeville's proof that the vices were indispensable for the maintenance of capitalism, Marx added: This was no apology for capitalism. We believe that automobiles are necessary and we can predict the frequency of accidents, but we are not therefore inconsistent in deploring accidents and in trying to regulate traffic. But even the grounds on which Wilson presents the moral criticism in *Capital* as a value are obscure or inconsistent with his other views about morality. For although he recognizes that the labor theories of value and surplus value were framed in order to reveal the hidden relations of capitalist and worker in the division of the total social product, he rejects these theories as unscientific and metaphysical because they are formulated from the viewpoint of a group interest and because (like the marginal utility theory) they do not account for particular prices (a function that neither the Marxist nor the marginal utility theory was designed to perform). What then is the value of the moral element that Marx introduced into economics? It lies in the fact, apparently, that in analyzing economic processes, Marx is arguing in behalf of "basic human rights." These vague, unspecified rights are the "real bottom" of Marxism, according to Wilson. But they can never be "ultimately proved," and hence have to be defended or preached by an appeal to the feelings, by what Wilson calls "moral and emotional methods." Values, it seems, can only be conveyed irrationally. We are led to the conclusion that the scientific and theoretical parts of *Capital,* by which Marx tries to explain why capitalism leaves so many in want, are in error and without value because they are directed by moral assumptions, whereas the great value of the book lies in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rhetoric and indignation based on the same assumptions. Between two economic treatises, one defending, the other attacking capitalism, we could make only an arbitrary or emotional choice, since, according to Wilson, values cannot be "ultimately proved."

The difficulty arises, I think, from the failure to see the connection between the values and the facts analyzed by Marx. The critique of capitalism is an objective matter; it rests on scientific observations that this economy is incapable of satisfying the wants of the great mass of the people, and the prediction that because of its structure and operation, the capitalist system will continue to beget crises, wars, poverty and class conflicts. It is with reference to these wants and conflicts and the available resources that we evaluate objectively the capitalist order and the socialist proposals. If by the "basic human rights," Wilson means the elementary biological needs, these do not have to be "proved"; they are everywhere observable, as are also the consequences of their frustration; and if he means such ideals as liberty and equality, these too require no more "ultimate proof" than the hypotheses of natural science. These rights are values discovered and tested in experience under given conditions; we have learned that where men have certain rights, they are better able to promote their interests and to resolve conflicts; and the conception of these rights, their actual content, changes with new conditions and desires, which may be foreseen, observed, criticized and controlled. To oppose the biological factor in values to scientific methods of valuation is to open the way to just that irrationalism and dogmatism that Wilson condemns. It is, of course, often hard to know in advance the consequences of our actions, but experience is the final ground of judgment. In devising a form of society which is more likely to promote human satisfactions than the present one, we are still within the realm of objective criteria. Wilson argues that since we cannot prove that "the progress of human institutions involves a process of progressive democratization," we have to make "moral and emotional" appeals. But the socialist doesn't have to prove that the economic changes going on before his eyes will by themselves produce a more democratic society. He has rather to show that by a democratic organization of society, the economic machine is likely to function better and to satisfy the wants now frustrated, and he has to devise a successful method for bringing this about.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In making rhetorical and emotional appeals the final ground of social convictions, Wilson confuses the psychological conditions of persuasion and the scientific validity of the statements which assert the relative adequacy of means to ends and the appropriateness of ends to means. The discovery that capitalism entails misery leads the victims and those who sympathize with them to revalue the capitalist forms which they have hitherto accepted as good. The effects of capitalism and the revaluation may both be observed. There is nothing necessarily irrational or mysterious in values, as Wilson seems to believe.

He imagines that through his concept of "basic human rights" as the foundation of Marxism it will be possible to overcome the distressing amoralism of revolutionary tactics and the irreconcilability of the ethical standards of opposed classes. It is true, as Wilson says, that Marxists have given little thought to the theoretical problems of ethics, but his own attempts to indicate a solution of the moral dilemmas of revolution, are much too vague to guide one. The point at which Marxism differs crucially from modern naturalistic writing on value (including Dewey, whose recent little work, *Theory of Valuation*, far surpasses in clarity and sharpness anything in Marxist literature) is in the deeper recognition of the extent of the conflict of group interests and its bearing on the estimation of plans for social change. (And this is precisely the issue that moralistic critics of Marxism evade; they are silent about the consequences of the admitted irreconcilability of class interests for their own democratic programs.) Wilson has shown by apt quotations that Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, were very much aware of a conflict between the demands of the revolutionary cause and the accepted morality. But such difficulties are the very stuff of moral experience; we are always sacrificing one value to another. The revolutionists reject an absolute moral law, for they know how such a law, far from being universal in practice, is limited by time and place and the needs of a single group, and may stand in the way of the achievement of new, more urgent ends.

Yet in defending their own actions, they sometimes appeal to the morality of the class they despise, or they invoke higher ends, above classes. In doing so they recognize that, historically, certain broad ends and guiding principles have emerged which are valued by contending groups, though not equally promoted by them. Even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

virtues of love, courage and loyalty assume a different scope and content according to the class and the moment. But a more embracing, although not absolute, morality is also envisaged, or the revolutionist could not speak of the victory of the proletariat as a means of freeing all mankind. By their contribution to this great end, rather than by fixed moral rules, are judged the single acts of the revolution: lies and force are permissible, if they are necessary to advance the cause; but if lies and force obstruct the path, they are thereby condemned. It may be, as Wilson charges, that the lies and the severity of Lenin's dictatorship toward the class enemy are responsible for the lies and severity of Stalin's toward the class itself; but this doesn't alter the validity of the principle itself, that acts are judged as good or bad according to the way in which they affect the achievement of the democratic socialist society, which is the main goal. Not to have foreseen the bad results of a lie is no defect of principle; it is a weakness of judgment in applying the guiding principle, a miscalculation. If it is true that one will not promote the "basic rights," if one begins by violating them, nevertheless the "basic human rights" are not a sufficient guide to the choice of means. They are much too general.

The critics of revolutionary "amoralism," once so vehement in denouncing the Bolsheviks' disregard of elementary values of truth and the sanctity of human life, recognize this when they in turn call on us to defend capitalist democracy by force and keep silent about its miseries and oppression. In every such choice, there is involved a forecast of the results; future generations will be better able to judge whether our acts have promoted the ends, rooted in our wants and conditions of life, which they continue to share. That is what Trotsky meant when he appealed to the judgment of history; it is no more mystical than the retrospective historical judgment of his critics who discern after him his mistakes.

GOD BLESS AMERICA

THE TRIUMPH OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM. By Louis M. Hacker. Simon & Schuster. $3.00.

At a time when Lewis Mumford, Archibald MacLeish, Dorothy Thompson, Waldo Frank and all the university presidents are bleating for the return of the lost Myths, Heroes and Ideals which were betrayed by that most sly of fifth columnists, critical intelligence, a book like this is an agreeable prophylaxis. Louis Hacker is so old-fashioned that, in 1940, he has written a history of the country wherein Washington continues to be a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rich merchant-planter, Lincoln a back-tracking conciliator, and where, in the entire 460 pages, not a single cherry twig blooms or rail is split by (hand-forged, patriot-wielded) axe.

The Triumph of American Capitalism is an interpretative economic history of the United States to 1900. The settlement of the Americas is understood as an offshoot in the growth of European mercantile capitalism, and Hacker therefore begins with a brief sketch of the early development of European capitalism. He concentrates his focus, naturally, on England, which, following the Puritan revolution, organized the colonies under the Mercantilist System as dependent feeders of the home merchants, shippers, bankers and early industrialists. This blocked the independent development of the native mercantile capitalism in the thirteen colonies which were, besides, treated as poor relations in the larger British overseas family. The yoke was thrown off, and United States mercantile capitalism began a new advance under the political structure of a sovereign nation.

United States capitalism, Hacker insists, remained primarily mercantile rather than industrial until the Civil War. By 1860 the southern planter economy was up against a wall at the same time that northern mercantile capitalism and its leaders were pretty well played out and unable to complete the transition to an industrial basis proper. New forces, politically organized in the Republican party, took over, drove through the shift to industrial capitalism, and conquered state power through the Civil War. Then followed the bounding rise of United States industrial capitalism to a climax at the end of the century. The percentage figures of industrial growth between 1850 and 1880 should once again caution socialists against "proving the superiority of socialist economy" by even the claimed figures of the Soviet Five-Year Plans.

It seems discourteous to make complaints about a book conceived along such lines. Let well enough alone, we might easily conclude. If this were the way that schools taught pupils the history of their country, there would be enough cause for rejoicing. But Hacker, by his own approach and by what others expect of him, asks more than comparison with the history-book choice of Kiwanis clubs and Elwood school boards.

For this reason, I feel compelled to wonder: just what is the point of this book? why is it appearing just now? And I have trouble finding answers.

The book is not, to any considerable extent, a work of original scholarship. As indication: there is a dearth of reference to primary source material, and at least 90 references to secondary sources. Incidentally, I do not myself see the excuse for a historian's so often adding to his own interpretative opinion of events a repetition in the form of an interpretative opinion of some other historian. Constant quotations preceded by such phrases as "In the words of W. R. Scott," "In the words of Professor Nettels," "To quote Samuel Flagg Bemis," "Carter Goodrich and Sol Davison . . . conclude very properly," "The Negro historian, W. E. B. Du Bois, wisely says," . . . All this appeal to authority instead of evidence leaves a rather medieval after-taste.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nor does any novelty or special cogency in the interpretative scheme seem to justify the book. The bulk is written in terms of class-struggle postulates. Indeed, the point of view is close to a mechanistic economic determinism. So far as the general interpretation goes, in spite of minor and sometimes clarifying changes there doesn't seem to be much advance over the Beards, whose influence is apparent.

But it is the last chapter, "Was American Capitalism a Success?" an eight and a half page projection beyond the closing of the story in 1900, that is most astounding. The very question which titles the chapter is ridiculous in terms of Hacker's own method. Success for whom and for what? Nevertheless, Hacker finds that "In the light of the analysis I have pursued through these pages, it seems to me that to raise the question is to answer it." Yes, yes, a thousand times yes: "that capitalism was a success."

Following industrial capitalism, says the last chapter, comes finance-capitalism. Then, in the 1930's, "the New Deal launched on its way state capitalism in the United States." The aims of New Deal state capitalism are: "To halt large-scale business and banking failure, to prevent agricultural bankruptcy, to take in the slack created by the decline of foreign markets, and to alleviate human distress, protect small-property ownership, create work, and guarantee social security to unemployables." This quotation is not from the Democratic National Committee, but from the aforesaid last chapter. And wonderful days are ahead for New Deal state capitalism. "The idea of egalitarianism" is woven "into the warp and woof of our tradition." ". . . the tradition of the Enlightenment, the American Revolution, Jeffersonianism, Old Radical Republicanism, Populism. This is the American tradition: and I firmly believe it will make us economically secure and keep us politically free."

Such twaddle from one who aims to write scientific history is absurd enough from any point of view. But in Hacker's new book, which spends 424 pages giving an economic, class-struggle interpretation of United States history, proving that this "tradition" he suddenly appeals to never made serious headway against the development of major economic forces, it is bewildering. Every social and political struggle and program that arose before 1900 he immediately reduces to the specific economic interests of specific classes. History, evidently, changed spots when Roosevelt took it over. The nation, after 150 years of exploitation, fraud, enrichment of the few and impoverishment of the many (see Hacker, *op. cit.*) becomes one happy family under Roosevelt's fatherly eye.

Hacker has a right to conclude a history book at 1900. But he has no right to present a theory and method of historical analysis whose application stops at 1900. The last chapter raises doubts about the seriousness of the entire work. Or, perhaps—particularly when we recall the surely ambiguous title, *The Triumph of American Capitalism*—it shows a new kind of seriousness, one not so distant as it first seemed from Lewis Mumford, Archibald MacLeish, Dorothy Thompson, Waldo Frank and all the university presidents.

JAMES BURNHAM

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"IN WHAT HOUR"

IN WHAT HOUR. By Kenneth Rexroth. Macmillan. $1.75.

First books are usually made from pretended attitudes; Rexroth's *In What Hour* comes somewhat too late in his life for that. The sobriety, the fatigue, the sense that a good deal has passed by and little has been grasped, seem to belong to him peculiarly. There are a few poor attempts at frivolity, mostly in the titles, but the book is naturally elegiac.

The setting of the poems, in the mountains of California, has much to do with the tone. The self observes from a height, or at a distance. Usually events are not known sharply as here and now but merely as *up there* or *down there*. The sense of touch has been lost, and with it the world's edges and details. A few different kinds of poems are contained in the book; their words have in common an abstractness that makes for monotony; and an almost obstinate repetition of sounds gives them a sort of character:

> One hundred feet overhead the fog from the Pacific
> Moves swiftly over the hills and houses of San Francisco.
> After the bright March day the interior valleys
> Suck great quantities of cool air in from the ocean.

It is a world not without color and movement, yet these have been generalised almost to the point of disappearance:

> The skill of the kingfisher was never
> More clear than now, nor the scream of the jay,
> As the deer shifts her covert at a footfall;
> Nor the butterfly tulip ever brighter
> In the white spent wheat; nor the pain
> Of a wasp stab ever an omen more sure.

The pain here seems more an omen than a pain. If the creatures happen to make one think of Marianne Moore's poetry, the difference nevertheless is obvious. In her poems, though whole objects may be static, and an array is presented rather than a world, there is at least a permanent clarity or iridescence in the parts. Rexroth usually leaves the reader with an inactive diffuse remainder.

In some of these poems the sense of distance is temporal as well as spatial. Their tense is the past, and some bear actual dates. The first part of the book, called *Lessons in Geography and History*, has an epigraph from Whitehead: "The next chapter is concerned with the puzzling fact that there is an actual course of events which is in itself a limited fact, in that metaphysically speaking, it might have been otherwise." There is no art without memory, but in Rexroth the attempt at remembrance of an actual course of events obliterates the present:

> For a month now, wandering over the Sierras,
> A poem had been gathering in my mind. . . .
> Last night I remembered the date and it all
> Began to grow together and take on purpose, etc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The result, in one kind of his poems, is an amiable but thin and powerless realism. The quality of history can never be caught by a rumination on the past; the artist is most "historical" when he concerns himself with the "present moment."

In most of the poems a vague solitary self is present, but remains unrealised because society is missing.

> Being is social in its immediacy,
> Private in final implications;
> Life is built of contact and dies secretly;
> So existants live in history and die out
> In fulfillment of individuals.

It is "being in its immediacy" that Rexroth fails to catch. When he writes about human beings he uses an irony as thin as his plainest realism:

> Chang Yuen is on the threshold of a remarkable career.
> He is a minor official in Nanking;
> However he is intimate with the highest circles in the capital, etc.

He writes in this flat manner well, and I suppose he is making a virtue of his inability to activate words, to involve them in new relations. But this is a mere relapse into another period (when Pound was most active). It is an abdication, I think, and solves nothing.

The later pages contain some of Rexroth's rather extended "cosmogonies," with the more perverse ones of the little magazine days not printed. He goes up another thousand feet on his mountain and reports on the disengaged things that go past him. Everything flies, floats or falls, in no order:

> I passed the black fountain
> I passed the swathed man
> I passed the meteorite
> I passed the tireless mice

and so on, resembling a long humorless face, and no better or worse than most Surrealist passages. Up Mountain or down Alimentary Canal, such "freedom" of words defeats itself. Art needs an obstacle, and deteriorates when it becomes a matter of indifference what word comes where.

There are Rexroth's usual dozens of philosophical vocables, almost always unrelated and unassimilated. One is sure he has read *Process and Reality* and uncertain he has learned from it. And why must a poem be called "Toward an Organic Philosophy"? Rexroth seems unaware that he should remove the preliminaries of poetry from the poems themselves.

But Rexroth is an original, and at least makes his own errors. In the lines

> There are no teeth in most orchids
> The bas-relief tilts in the wall

the rhythm is like Pound's, and sometimes one is made to think of Eliot's later elegies (though Rexroth of course lacks the intensity as well as the suffocation). Still Rexroth creates an unmistakable personal ambience.

GORDON SYLANDER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Index to Volume VII (1940)

	Issue	Page
ANONYMOUS		
The Train	6	461
APPLEBY, John T.		
Cross-Country: The Ozarks	6	449
BISHOP, Elizabeth		
The Fish (poem)	2	107
BISHOP, John Peale		
The Yankee Trader (poem)	2	109
BOGAN, Louise		
A Note on *Jean Sans Terre*	4	294
James Joyce—Herbert Gorman (BR)	4	318
BURNHAM, James		
The Triumph of American Capitalism—Louis M. Hacker (BR)	6	479
CALAS, Nicolas		
On Revolutionary Sadism	1	41
CHANLER, David		
Cross-Country: Newark, N. J.	3	230
CLARK, Eleanor		
New Directions 1939—Ed. James Laughlin IV (BR)	2	160
The Cosmological Eye—Henry Miller (BR)	2	160
DAICHES, David		
The American Scene (review of group of novels)	3	244
DENNEY, Reuel		
The Wolf, the Muskrat, and the Crow (story)	4	283
DEUTSCH, Babette		
Tommy Gallagher's Crusade—James Farrell (BR)	1	72
The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman (BR)	4	323
DOUGHTY, Le Garde S.		
End-Winter Night South (poem)	1	23
"Thy Neighbor's Goods" (story)	3	236
DURRELL, Lawrence		
Nemea (poem)	5	379
EBERHART, Richard		
"But to reach the archimedean point . . ." (poem)	5	357
ELIOT, T. S.		
East Coker (poem)	3	181
FARRELL, James T.		
Anti-Stalinist Intellectuals	2	139
Baseball and Culture	4	311
Leon Trotsky	5	389
Mortimer J. Adler: A Provincial Torquemada	6	453
GOLL, Ivan		
Jean San Terre Traverse L'Atlantique (poem)	4	290
GOODMAN, Paul		
February 1938 (poem)	4	282
The Mean, The Maximum, and The Minimum (story)	5	330
The Death of Leon Trotsky (poem)	6	425
Film Chronicle	6	456
GREENBERG, Clement		
Toward a Newer Laocoon	4	296
GREGORY, Horace		
Bloody Wedding—Trans. Gilbert Neiman (BR)	1	69
Poems—Trans. Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili (BR)	1	69
Broadway McPhail Applies for Reemployment at His Old Stand (poem)	4	314
HAWKINS, Desmond		
London Letter	1	54
HEPPENSTALL, Rayner		
English Nightmare	5	362
HOOK, Sidney		
Ideas Are Weapons—Max Lerner (BR)	2	152
The Integral Humanism of Jacques Maritain	3	204

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

	Issue	Page
JARRELL, Randall		
A Nursery Rhyme (poem)	1	19
The Refugees (poem)	1	20
Poetry in a Dry Season (BR)	2	164
KAZIN, Alfred		
Mr. Brooks's New England	5	402
KEES, Weldon		
June, 1940 (poem)	5	357
MACDONALD, Dwight		
Notes on a Strange War	3	170
National Defense: The Case for Socialism	4	250
Trotsky Is Dead	5	339
The Defense of Britain (with Stephen Spender)	5	405
MacNEICE, Louis		
The Preacher (poem)	4	315
Oxford in the Twenties	6	430
MATHEWS, Jackson		
To Wilfred Owen (poem)	5	356
McCARTHY, Mary		
Theatre Chronicle	2	135
MILLS, Clark		
John Landless Crosses the Atlantic (poem)	4	291
MORMICHE, Cyprien		
Paris Letter	1	59
Paris Letter	3	240
MORRIS, George L. K.		
Picasso: 4000 Years of His Art	1	50
The Museum of Modern Art	3	200
NAGEL, Ernest		
Language and Reality—Wilbur Marshall Urban (BR)	4	320
PORTER, Katherine Anne		
A Goat for Azazel (A.D. 1688)	3	188
RAHV, Philip		
What Is Living and What Is Dead	3	175
The Cult of Experience in American Writing	6	412
REIMANN, Guenter		
The Fate of Conservative Man	5	391
ROSENBERG, Harold		
The Unlearning (poem)	5	354
On the Fall of Paris	6	440
ROSS, David		
Newsreel (poem)	5	358
ROSS, James		
Roman (story)	5	380
SCHAPIRO, Meyer		
To the Finland Station—Edmund Wilson (BR)	6	466
SCHUBERT, David		
The Snow in the Mouse Wind (poem)	5	359
SCHWARTZ, Delmore		
America! America! (story)	2	112
SCOTT, W. T.		
Collected Poems of Kenneth Fearing (BR)	6	484
SERGE, Victor		
Conquered City (story)	1	3
SHAPIRO, Karl J.		
Death of Emma Goldman (poem)	4	267
SPENDER, Stephen		
September Journal	2	90
The Defense of Britain (with Dwight Macdonald)	5	405
SWAN, Emma		
The Wonder City (poem)	4	317
SYLANDER, Gordon		
Song: Young Oedipus and the Scarecrow (poem)	1	21
Marine (poem)	4	317
In What Hour—Kenneth Rexroth (BR)	6	482

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

	Issue	Page
TRAGER, Frank N.		
Frederick L. Schuman: A Case History	2	143
TRILLING, Lionel		
Parrington, Mr. Smith and Reality	1	24
"Elements That Are Wanted"	5	367
VAZAKAS, Byron A.		
From "Poems for the End of 1939" (poem)	2	110
VIDAL, Georges		
Paris Letter	1	59
VIVAS, Eliseo		
D. H. Lawrence & Susan His Cow—William York Tyndall (BR)	1	67
WHITE, M. G.		
John Dewey—Sidney Hook (BR)	1	62
The Philosophy of John Dewey—Ed. P. A. Schilpp (BR)	1	62
WOLFE, Bertram D.		
Stalin—Boris Souvarine (BR)	1	73
WOODCOCK, George		
Merthyrmawr (poem)	1	22
ZABEL, Morton Dauwen		
Rimbaud: Life and Legend	4	268
ZATURENSKA, Marya		
Silence and the Wayfarer (poem)	2	111

A Correction

In some undiscoverable way, a section was dropped out of James Ross's story, "Roman," in the last issue. We print below the missing pages of the story, and we print, at the beginning and at the end of the missing section, the paragraphs between which the excision occurred. The error was made on page 382 of the last issue. We wish to express to Mr. Ross our regret and apologies.

—THE EDITORS

He went to Old Man White's place all right, but he never farmed a lick. He started making liquor with a tin tub outfit and he made the sorriest and rawest liquor I ever tasted in my life. But he could make it cheap that way and in a little while he was underselling me. After that he broadened out; in the end he took most of my trade away from me. I didn't like that but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I never did say anything about it nor let on that it mattered one way or the other to me. I could have made my liquor the way Roman made his, but that wasn't my way. I don't make any filthy liquor. If the people who drink it want sorry stuff that's their business. But they'll have to buy it from somebody else besides me.

Roman cut in on me in other ways. Before long it got so that I couldn't get any of the niggers that I trusted to help me make liquor, so I just had to go along making what little I could by myself. Then one night somebody came to my still and busted it up. They completely wrecked it and left it there in the honeysuckle vines, except for the copper tubing and the worm. It was a good worm. I guess they took that with them.

I had to stop making liquor after that. I had five thousand dollars

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saved up so I wasn't in any strain about money. But I wanted to make a living somehow without having to break in on the money I had saved. I tried to farm a little better than I'd been doing, but it wasn't much use. My land is too poor to sprout a decent crop of peas.

I managed to make enough to feed me out of the farm and I pieced out my income by playing poker every Saturday night in Corinth. I got to playing poker when I was in the Army and ever since the war I had been playing a little, usually with considerable success. I played poker seriously and when I didn't have anything else to do I would study about the game. After a while I got so good that very few people in Corinth would play with me for much money.

Roman had never played poker with me while I had him hired and I didn't know that he cared for the game, but it seemed that he did. I kept hearing from the brickyard niggers about him. They all said he was hell. I was a little afraid to play with him; he was always too close-mouthed and hard-working for a nigger.

I didn't have much to do along then but ponder over losing my liquor trade and my still and finally I worked up my nerve and decided to try and get Roman in a big poker game and break him. I knew he must be pretty good, because I had heard that he won twelve hundred dollars from Charley Duke and Charley was the next best in town to me. Still I believed I could take Roman to the cleaners.

One Saturday night Roman was in town and some of the boys got us together in a game in one of the back rooms of the New York Cafe. The New York Cafe is a nigger joint over in the Shantytown section of Corinth, but a lot of white folks hang out over there because you can buy liquor there and practically anything else that you want.

I went to town fixed for Roman if he happened to be there. I had all the money I had with me that night. A little over five thousand dollars, mostly in hundred dollar bills.

There was a good crowd playing there that night, but the real playing was between me and Roman. The room we played in was right beside the cafe kitchen and you could smell catfish frying in corn meal grease while we played. The game went on until four o'clock in the morning with the advantage shifting from one of us to the other, but toward the last he got lucky and cleaned me out. He was just naturally lucky that night. He didn't brag about beating me; he didn't say a word, but you could tell that he was pleased. I hated to lose all that money to him, especially with all those boys there to see it, but I never let on that I cared.

That was in the early part of August. I didn't see Roman again for about three months.

I made two bales of cotton that fall and when I sold them I had a hundred and twenty-five dollars. I made up my mind that I wouldn't play poker any more, because that money had to run me till I could make another crop, or find a job somewhere.

One night in the first week of November I was in Corinth and I went into the back room of the New York Cafe to buy a drink. Roman was back

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there with another nigger and a couple of white fellows. They were playing stud poker. I watched them a long time and finally I couldn't stand it any longer and I got in the game. I started out pretty good. If I had quit about midnight, when the other fellows dropped out, I would have been over a hundred dollars to the good but on the next couple of hands I fell back a little and then we got to see-sawing around. I'd win a hand and then Roman'd win one. That didn't suit me much so I got up and bought another big twenty-five cent drink of popskull liquor. I reckon I got about half a pint of liquor for that quarter. It brought me back to life.

I went back to the room where Roman was waiting and we ran a few more hands, but there wasn't much to them. I saw that Roman was looking sort of shifty and restless like he wanted to quit. If I had acted with any sense I would have let him quit and been satisfied with what I had won, but I was feeling lucky after that drink and besides I wanted to mop up the dirty floor with the black son of a bitch.

I had seen enough of his roll that night to guess that he had around three hundred dollars left. I struck on an idea to get hold of that money.

I said: 'Roman, let's run a few hands of blackjack for a change."

He was sitting straight as a ramrod in the chair. I saw that copperhead snake look come into his eyes. Like he was waiting for you to come one step closer.

"All right," he said.

We cut for the deal. He got it and we bet five dollars. Right off the bat I hit blackjack and was ten dollars up.

Roman said: "Let's make it ten dollars from now on."

I just nodded my head.

I was out for blood and all of a sudden I knew Roman was out for the same thing. I pulled out my pocketbook. I reckon I had a little over two hundred dollars in it. Roman pulled out his roll—I never saw him have a pocketbook—and put it in his lap.

For about ten minutes there we ran the cards so fast that I couldn't keep track of the game. I looked over at the pile of money in Roman's lap. It was thinning down. We ran another hand and I hit blackjack with the Ace of Spades and the King of Clubs. It was a good sign for me to hit blackjack with the black cards. I raked in the twenty dollars and held up my hand for Roman to wait till I'd counted my money. I had three hundred and seventeen dollars.

I looked at Roman. "I'll throw it all on the next hand if you don't think it's too rich for your blood," I told him.

He didn't answer, just pulled another roll of money from the little pocket on the side of his overall leg.

I was the dealer. I shuffled them good and Roman cut. I dealt him the King of Hearts and myself the King of Spades. The next trip I dealt myself the six of Diamonds. Roman was holding his card close and pondering it. Finally he laid it down, face up on the table. "I'll ride on what I got," he said. Besides his King he had the nine of Spades. That beat my sixteen points.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON CHANGING OUR NAME—

Last issue we announced that we had decided to change the name of *Partisan Review* to *The Forties*. We invited our readers' reactions and asked for suggestions as to possible other names.

The reactions have been coming in and they are, almost without exception, unfavorable. Typical comments are: "*The Forties* sounding too much like 'The Roaring Forties'; you'll sound like a rival of *Cue*." ". . . a little too flat sounding; there is nothing assertive or critical about it." "All magazines take sides but yours is the only one that says so." "I hope you retain the name, *Partisan Review*. If the magazine retains its relatively high standards of criticism, it is bound to appear very partisan in an environment of star-spangled banner magazines, all non-partisan." "*The Forties* sounds like the shadow of middle age." ". . . banal and barren of any connotation of your purpose" ". . . pretty terrible . . ."

Are there any readers who particularly like the name, *The Forties?* Or can any one suggest some other and better name? For the record, and as a possible source of inspiration, the following are the alternatives to *Partisan Review* that have so far been suggested: *The New Decade, The Vital Point, Focus, Probe, The American Criterion, Mid-Century, The Long View, The Vanguard, Crisis, Surge, Counter-Attack, The Watchman.*

For the present, we have decided to make no change in the name. Suggestions are still invited.

THE EDITORS

Statement

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Acts of Congress of August 24, 1912, and March 3, 1933, of *Partisan Review* published bimonthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1940.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.:

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Nancy G. Macdonald, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that she is the Business Manager of the *Partisan Review* and that the following is, to the best of her knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, Partisan Review, 117 East 10th Street, N. Y. City.

Editors, F. W. Dupee, 117 E. 10th St., N. Y. City; Dwight Macdonald, 117 E. 10th St., N. Y. City; George L. K Morris, 117 E. 10th St., N. Y. City; William Phillips, 117 E. 10th St., N. Y. City; Philip Rahv, 117 E. 10th St., N. Y. City.

Managing Editor, None.

Business Manager, Nancy G. Macdonald, 117 E. 10th St., N. Y. City.

2. That the owner is: Foundation for Cultural Experiment, Inc., 117 E. 10th St., N. Y. City. (A non-profit corporation organized under the membership laws in the State of New York.)

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

(Signed) Nancy G. Macdonald.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1940. (Seal) Manuel Lichtenstein, Notary Public, Bronx County. Bronx County Clerk's No. 161, N. Y. Co. Clk.'s No. 763, Reg. No. 1L452. Commission expires March 30, 1941.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

James Laughlin announces

NEW DIRECTIONS 1940

The fifth annual collection of creative and experimental writing will be ready in mid-December, at $3.50, featuring:

I **Young Americans:** Prose by Paul Goodman, Eudora Welty, David Kerner, Alfred Young Fisher, Weldon Kees and Meyer Liben.

II **Values In Surrealism:** A critical survey of Surrealist Writing, including an anthology, in translation, representing 35 Surrealists from Gerard de Nerval to Gracq . . . essays by Herbert J. Muller and Kenneth Burke . . . exposition of Surrealist philosophy, history and "platform" by Nicolas Calas.

III **New Directions In Design:** Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West . . . Reconstruction of Bridgeport

IV Little Anthology of Contemporary Poetry

V Criticism: Notes on Writing by Katherine Anne Porter . . . Inside The Whale (on Henry Miller) by George Orwell . . .

VI **The American Scene:** A section of photographs and texts on "American Folkways" by Wright Morris . . . A chapter from James Agee's book on the sharecroppers—"Let Us Now Praise Famous Men."

NEW DIRECTIONS

Norfolk, Connecticut

Send for our catalog listing new books by William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Robert Hivnor, Henry Miller, Delmore Schwartz, Franz Kafka, Dylan Thomas, R. P. Blackmur, John Crowe Ransom and Kenneth Patchen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED